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China

CHINA TOURISM

FESTIVITIES IN SOUTHEASTERN GUIZHOU

FENGHUANG — A DIAMOND IN GREEN LAND

THREE TIMES TO KUCHE GRAND CANYON

269

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CHINA TOURISM

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Article by Chan Yat Nin, Ling Qihui, Ouyang Changpei & others
Though a place does not have "three feet of flat land nor three consecutive days of sun", Guizhou captivates every traveller with its abundant natural attractions and fascinating cultural customs. In the Qiandongnan (Southeast Guizhou) Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, where the Miao and Dong ethnic communities inhabit, tourists may be soaked in rich festivities all year round: from romantic Sisters' Rice Festival to sacred Bull Slaughtering Festival. We also introduce you to the three hometowns of the Dongs — Liping, Congjiang, and Rongjiang, as well as the scenic Wuyang River tourist area.

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Mountains, rivers, bridges and elevated houses are all typical scenery found in common ancient Chinese cities, but they all appear unique in Fenghuang (Phoenix), a place located in western Hunan Province. This is thanks to it was the hometown of a renowned Chinese writer, Shen Congwen. In recent years, the locals have become more aware of preserving time-honoured erections in the town, such as the Fengyu (Wind and Rain) Tower, Rainbow Bridge, and even every street and lane.

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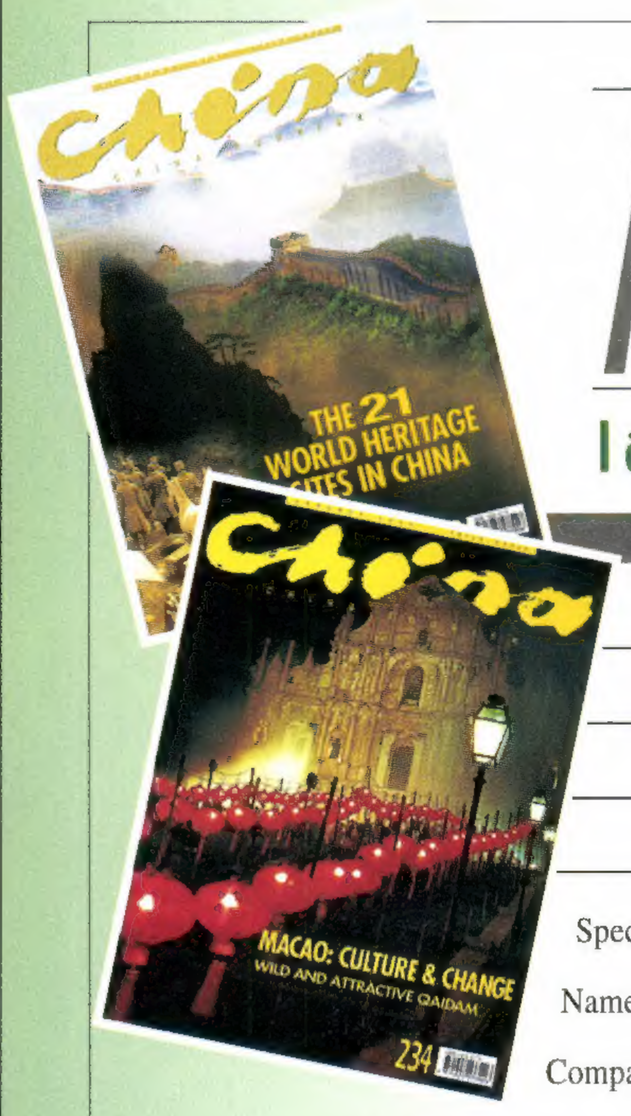

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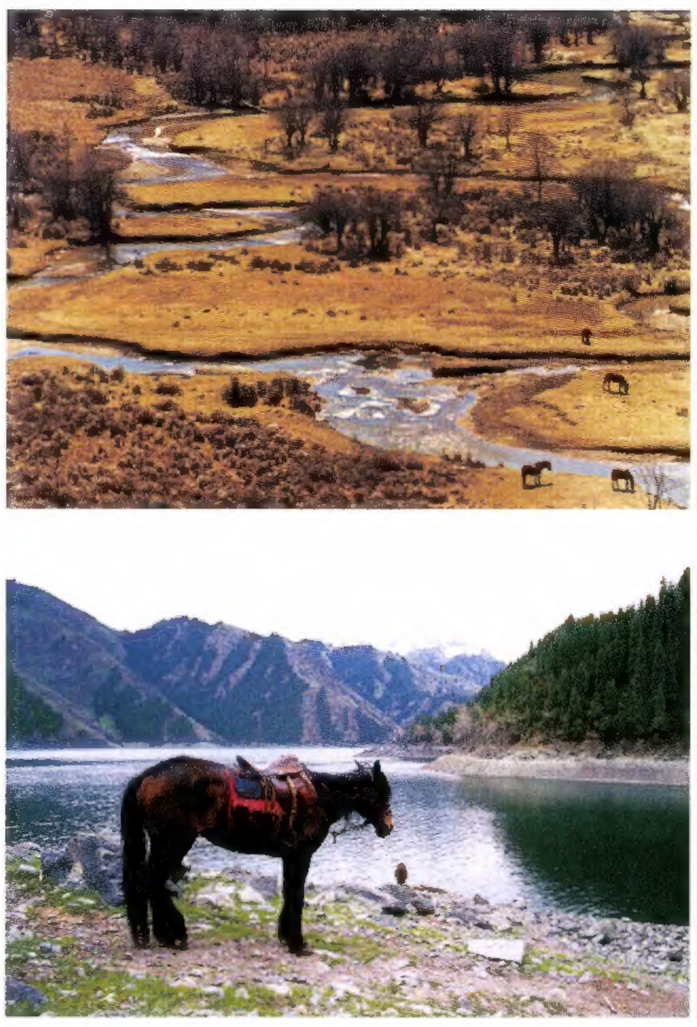
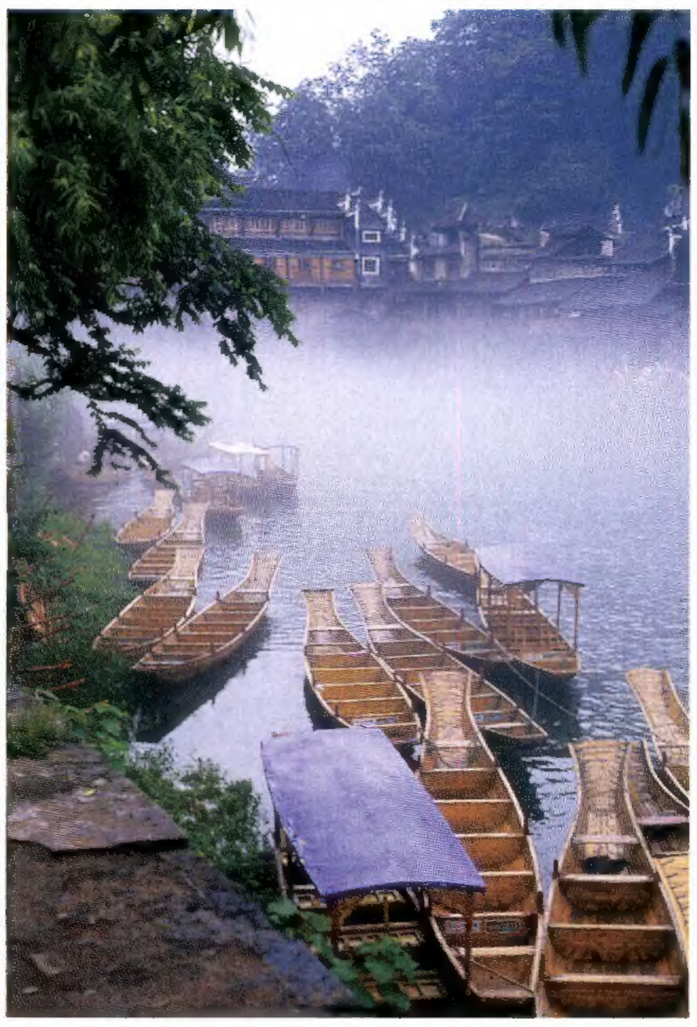

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60 Into the World of Egrets
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The Xiangshan (Elephant Hill) Forestry Centre located in the suburb area of Nanchang, capital city of Jiangxi Province, attracts a large flock of egrets every year to rest and reproduce. In fact, out of 61 species from 17 subgenus of egrets in the world, China owns 21 species from 10 subgenus of them. As photographers treat egret as an ideal shooting model, we also have to be more concerned in maintaining an unpolluted environment for the egret, which is known as a "monitoring bird of the environment."

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The Yuanmingyuan (Garden of Perfect Splendour) was once a gorgeous imperial garden. Nowadays, it remains only ruins of sumptuous buildings. Still, to many people including our correspondent, the ruined Yuanmingyuan is always much more attractive and meaningful than a refurbished one. Revisiting the garden after 30 years, the author reveals his personal feelings towards Yuanmingyuan as well as recalls his youth in those turmoil ages.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Real People, Real Culture

This month we focus on the Southeast Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture and its ethnic minorities. Quite apart from the stunning Guizhou landscapes, the Miao and Dong (and other) peoples' vibrant will fascinate visitors from far and wide and their festivals showcasing these cultures will attract more and more tourists.

Many festivals are organised by local government, and visitors are made very welcome, but remember this is not theme park culture. It is not Guizhou's answer to Disney World. The cultures underpinning the festivals are an integral part of daily life, not some sanitised recreation of history.

This was brought home to us when one of our translators declined to translate a somewhat graphic description of the ritual slaughter of an ox being sacrificed to tribal ancestors. Age-old rituals can sit uneasily alongside 21st century sensibilities.

Then there was a young Miao girl's embarrassment when a camera interrupted her courtship by a would-be lover. And the tribesman offended by a persistent attempt to offer money for a priceless example of his folk art.

These are real people with real lives. At all times we must remember to respect the people, their faiths and their cultural imperatives. In an increasingly homogenised world those communities with ancient beliefs and cultures still intact, and the wisdom to hang on to what those cultures represent, become evenmore precious. We wouldn't knowingly tread on rare and delicate flowers. Let us intrude as lightly as possible on people like those in Guizhou so they may continue to enrich their lives, our lives and the lives of generations to come.

Travel wisely, travel well.

Photo by Chan Yat Nin

More Museums Brighten Beijing by 2008

The Museum of Chinese History

Revealed by the Beijing Bureau of Cultural Heritage, a number of large-scale museums will be added to Beijing's list of cultural institutions before the 2008 Olympics. They include the National Museum, the new wing of the National Art Museum, the new Capital Museum, the China Film Museum, and the China Automobile Museum.

The National Museum will be established at the Museum of Chinese History and Museum of the Chinese Revolution both located on east of Tian'anmen Square. With a total investment of 370 million yuan, the China Film Museum will be built in Chaoyang District and construction is to begin in this December.

By 2008, the number of museums in Beijing will reach 150 up from the present 118.

And the plan is the second round of museum construction in Beijing following the last one in the 1950s.

New Travel Route in Three Gorges and Shennongjia

A new travel route providing a package tour to two world famous tourist destinations, the Three Gorges and the Shennongjia Nature Reserve — known as the home of China's "Wild Men" — is to open in Central China's Hubei Province.

When the Three Gorges Dam begins storing water in June 2003, the water level of the Yangtse River will rise to allow visitors to arrive at a wharf in Xingshan County directly by boat. From there they can take a one-hour bus trip to Shennongjia. Hubei is speeding the construction of the wharf, three-star hotels and a two-way road between Xingshan County and Shennongjia. And training courses for tourist guides are planned.

Shennonjia Nature Reserve located in northwestern Hubei is noted for its long history, mystical virgin forests, high and elegant mountain peaks, limpid spring water and rare animals and plants. Over the past five years, four tourist zones and essential infrastructure facilities have already been built there.

Nansha, a To-be New Guangzhou

With an investment of 30 billion yuan, Nansha, a place in Guangdong Province's capital Guangzhou, will further be developed into a major industrial base over the next three years. It is expected to rise as "a new Guangzhou" at the mouth of the Pearl River.

The infrastructure project will focus on the construction of a high-speed transportation system linking Nansha with Guangzhou and other Pearl River Delta cities, as well as the renovation of Nansha's traffic network.

China's First Cross-straits Railway to Be Opened

A cross-straits railway, linking up Sourh China's Guangdong Province and the Hainan Island separated by the Qiongzhou Strait, will be finished and open to traffic on Dec 28, 2002.

Costing over four billion yuan, the project will erect a 139-km Zhanjiang-Hai'an Railway in Guangdong Province, a 24-km railway ferry service on the Qiongzhou Strait, and a 182-km Haikou-Chahe Rail Line on Hainan Island. The Zhanjiang-Hai'an section was already finished on January 28, 2002, and the other parts will be completed by the end of this year.

Approved by the State Council, China's highest governing body, in August 1998, the project is jointly financed by the Chinese Ministry of Railways, Hainan Province and Guangdong Province.

Hong Kong Promotes Wetland Eco-tours

Aiming at enhancing public awareness on conserving wetland, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) of the HKSAR government has organised a series of free wetland eco-tours for the public from November 2002 to March 2003.

The eco-tours, mainly 10 routes on Sundays or public holidays, will cover 10 wetlands in the territory. Each location has its highlights such as the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site in Tsim Bei Tsui, reed bed and relic of salt pans in Tai O, mudflat wildlife in To Kwa Peng and Kei Ling Ha, mangroves in Lai Chi Wo and Egretry in Luk Keng.

Experienced tour guides and volunteers who have attended comprehensive eco-tour training organised by AFCD will brief visitors on wetland wildlife and assist throughout the tours. Website: www.afcd.gov.hk

New Flight Timetable Practised

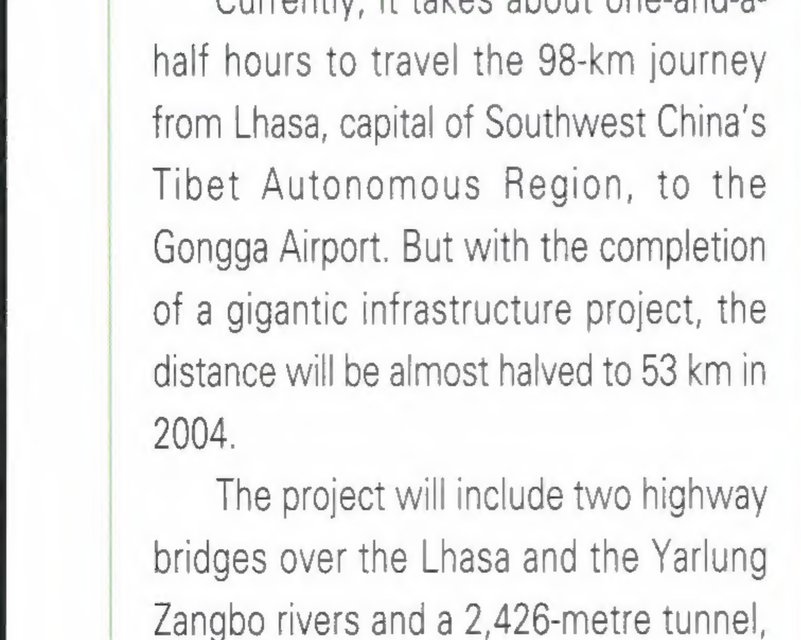
The new timetable has been implemented in late October and will be effective until March 29, 2003 for flights arriving to and departing from China, as well as for domestic flights.

A total of 24,039 flights will be scheduled in 128 airports during the period, including 1,618 flights corresponding to 59 foreign airlines and 1,373 international flights corresponding to 20 domestic airlines. Visitors can also check the timetable through the Internet: www.caac.cn.net

Closer of Lhasa and Gongga Airport

Currently, it takes about one-and-a-half hours to travel the 98-km journey from Lhasa, capital of Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, to the Gongga Airport. But with the completion of a gigantic infrastructure project, the distance will be almost halved to 53 km in 2004.

The project will include two highway bridges over the Lhasa and the Yarlung Zangbo rivers and a 2,426-metre tunnel, which will cover a total road length of 13.28 km. Construction of the two bridges and the tunnel will cost a total of 650 million yuan. Early preparations for the project have been completed.



A scene of Yarlung Zangbo River

Tiger Preserve in Heilongjiang to Enlarge

Under an estimated 30-million-yuan State Forestry Administration plan, the world's largest forestry park for Siberian tigers located in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province will see further growth.

The size of the park will enlarge from recent 400,000 square metres to one million square metres with improved facilities. It's name will be changed to the Breeding Base for Siberian Tigers. Also, the number of inhabitants at the park is expected to increase from the existing 270 tigers to 500 by 2005 and 1,000 by 2010.

The tiger park in Harbin only had eight Siberian tigers when it opened in 1986. With its present 270 Siberian tigers, it has become the world's largest breeding centre for artificially reproduced Siberian tigers.

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China's Largest Birds Park Opens

Chongqing Covering 40,000 square metres, the Chongqing Birds Park is the largest of its kind in China. Opened in late September, the park acts as a place of preserving birds and carrying scientific research of the birds.

There are more than 10,000 birds from over 100 species from America, Australia and Africa and Southeast Asia, including rare species like large beak bird, the world's largest golden crown parrot with a body length of 1.2 metres, and world's largest crane, the blue crown crane.

At the opening ceremony, a programme named "Peacocks Flying to the Southeast" was performed. A total of 150 peacocks were released on a 20-metre-high and 76-metre-long stage. When the large number of the colourful animal flied towards the audience, a heart-breaking scene was created.

Tourists will also be amazed by the unique skills of the birds: there are birds that can speak, recite poems, sing, and dance; or parrots that can calculate, pick up a cylinder, slide on ice, walk on steel cable, ride bicycle, play bowling, or pick up the fruits from the trees. Sometimes, they like to follow the steps of visitors, or stand on the visitors' shoulders. A harmony between man and animal is thoroughly formed in the garden.

Visit to the Yungang Grottoes

Shanxi Situated at Wuzhou Mountain in the western suburb of Datong City in Shanxi, the Yungang Grottoes contain a total of 45 caves which feature over 5,100 statues of various size. The statues include the images of Buddha, Bodhisattva, their principles, etc. There are also antique imitate-wooden erections, Buddhist-related relief, decorative patterns, as well as rock-carvings of ancient musical instruments.

Among the Yungang Grottoes, caves No. 5, 6, 9, 10, 16 and 20 are relatively famous. Cave No. 5, known as "Large Statues Cave", boasts the statue of Buddha of Three Worlds. The 17-metre Sakyamuni statue inside is the highest one in Yungan Grottoes. The relief Buddhist pagoda on the wall represents the combination of traditional Chinese architecture and Indian Buddhism art.

Transport: Take any buses which go from Datong to Zuoyun.
Opening hours: (summer) 08:00~18:30; (winter) 08:30~17:00
Tel: (352) 3026 230 Admission: 50 yuan

Zhuhai Builds Asia's Largest Golf Course

Guangdong A 108-hole golf course is under construction on Hengqin Island at the mouth of the Pearl River. The golf course, invested by Hong Kong company, will be the largest one in Asia. Part of the course will be opened in 2002. Guangdong receives large numbers of golfers from Hong Kong and Macao on weekends.

Golden Time to Tour Australia

Hong Kong Following the success of the first Mission in 2000, Tourism New South Wales held its 2002 Sales Mission at the Great Eagle Hotel, Hong Kong on October 31. The sales mission allows 10 key Tourism Operators from Sydney and New South Wales to meet with the local traders, showcasing new products and exploring cooperative opportunities.

Highlighted travel routes of the Mission include: (1) a golden triangular itinerary touring to Sydney, Blue Mountains, and Wollongong; (2) the newly-developed Pacific Coast Touring Route which starts northward from Sydney, passing Central Coast, Port-Stephens, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Byron Bay, and ends in Tweed Heads; (3) a tour to Wollongong, a rapidly-emerging adventure as well as study-tour destination in Australia. Besides participating in adventurous explorations, tourists can enjoy delicious seafood cuisines as well as picturesque scenes during these tours.

For more information, interested parties can visit the following websites: www.bluemountainstourism.org.au (Blue Moutains Tourism); www.cctourism.com.au (Central Coast Tourism); www.illawarratourism.com.au/ www.tourismwollongong.com (Tourism Wollongong & Illawarra Tourism).

Belmore Basin, Wollongong

Local Private Villa Opens to Public

Shanxi Deeply located in the suburbs of Jinzhong Prefecture in Shanxi Province, the exquisite Changjia (Chang Family) Villa which was rarely known by people has opened for the public after a one-year refurbishment. The 200-year-old mansion, covering an area of 600,000-plus square metres, owns more than 4,000 rooms of some 50 towers and 13 gardens. It is the largest private mansion found in the province. The renovated Changjia Villa features scenery combined with artificial hills, lakes, courts, gardens, halls, pavilions, verandas, and courtyards. All erections within the mansion are carefully designed. One of the gardens has collected the calligraphy pieces of 43 past Chinese emperors as well as Dowager Empress Cixi.

Aviation Tower Starts Operation

Shanghai The first aviation tower in city area has already officially started operation in Shanghai. The Shanghai Airlines pioneers the business in the building, providing departure registration service for passengers who are going to the Pudong International Airport. The thoroughfare which links the Shanghai Subway No. 2 and the aviation tower has also been opened.

Involving an investment of almost 300 million yuan, the aviation tower covers 30,000 square metres, with a comprehensive set of facilities such as providing flight tickets, offices, dining, sports centre, car park. After purchasing the flight tickets in the tower, travellers can conveniently arrive the Pudong Airport 40 minutes before the departure of the flight. The aviation tower also started providing international flight tickets from this late October.

Air Route Opens from Bangkok to Xiamen

Aviation An air route between Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, and Xiamen, a coastal city in East China's Fujian Province, has started service on October 29, 2002.

Xiamen is the seventh Chinese city to which Thai Airways International operates a direct flight. The other six are Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Hong Kong. The airline runs a total of 80 flights per week to China.

The flight from Bangkok to Xiamen takes three hours, and is scheduled for every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

The airline also plans to open eight more routes to China in the coming five years.

The Magnificent Panlong Gorge Waterfalls

Guangdong The Panlong Gorge Waterfalls in Deqing, Guangdong Province, is mainly combined by two groups of waterfalls, namely the 90-metre-high Tenglong Waterfall on the left and the 60-metre-high connecting Lingtian, Yanyu and Panlong waterfalls on the right. Meanwhile, they are surrounded by nearly 100 small-size waterfalls on both sides right one. All of them together form a striking waterfall group with a current stretching 5.3 kilometres and cover an area of over 100 hectares.

Covering an area of more than 2,000 hectares, the Panlong Gorge Eco-tourism Area feasts tourists with long-stretching canyons, undulating mountain ranges, ancient winding paths, as well as a 2,000-sq-mt naturally-formed terraced pool.

Cross-Province Travel Promoted in West China

Travel At a conference discussing travel affairs of Southwest China held in this October, representatives from six provinces in the region have selected more than 10 well-prepared travel routes. Among them, the cross-province routes are most attractive.

The affluent eco-tourism resources in Southwest China have provided excellent background for developing tourism. Both the eco-tours and the construction of eco-tour zones are effective to magnet tourists. Some places and provinces covered by the cross-province travel routes are listed below:

Yunnan Province ~ Kunming, Dali, Lijiang, Shangri-La, Lugu Lake; Tibet Autonomous Region ~ Chamdo, Nyingchi, Lhasa; Sichuan Province ~ Gonghai Lake, satellite base, Panzhihua Town, Daocheng Yading Scenic Area; Guizhou Province ~ Guiyang, Libo; and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region ~ Hechi, Liuzhou, Guilin.

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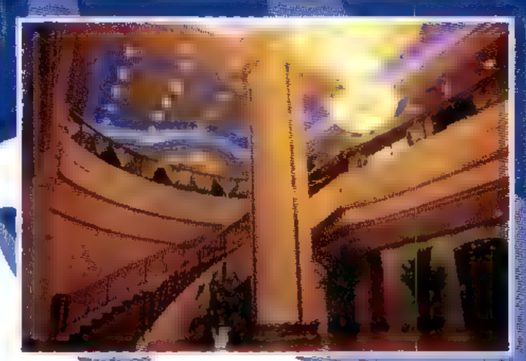
Conveniently located in Guangzhou's business and tourism hub, the international three-star Guangzhou Hutian Hotel is next to the delicate Liuhua Jade Garden and close to the China Export Commodities Exchange Exhibition. It is just five minutes drive to the Guangzhou Railway Station and six kilometres to the Baiyun International Airport.

The hotel boasts 212 guestrooms of different sizes providing a spacious, comfortable environment; a comprehensive choice of large, middle, and small conference rooms; a fine classic Chinese restaurant offering Hunan and Guangdong cuisines, with a capacity for 500 diners; as well as exotic restaurants serving Western food and authentic Arabian feasts.

Guangzhou Hutian Hotel is well equipped with entertainment facilities including nightclubs, leisure centre, beauty salon, discos, and dozens of deluxe Karaoke rooms, bringing new experiences to your journey.



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Focus on Yunnan

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.

Paperback ~~HK$80~~ HK$76
Hard cover ~~HK$150~~ HK$120

Focus on Fujian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen and the Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.

Paperback ~~HK$80~~ HK$76

Focus on Shanghai

Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturism is seen in its music — operas, nostalgic jazz and discos — and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads.

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Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.

Paperback ~~HK$80~~ HK$76
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Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoqing's Seven Star Crags, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xiqiao Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old colonial buildings.

Paperback ~~HK$80~~ HK$76
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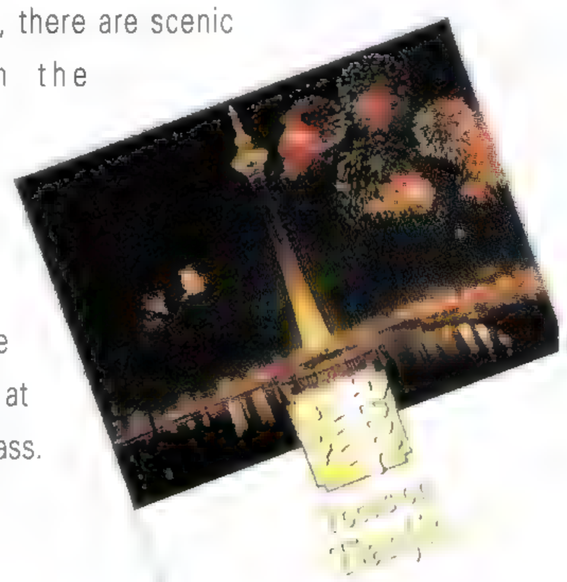
Focus on Guizhou

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

Paperback HK$76
Hard cover HK$150 HK$120

Focus on Tianjin

Tianjin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration, is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts, including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass.



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Focus on Xinjiang

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture

Paperback HK$76
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Focus on Beijing

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FEATURE STORY

CAPTIVATING SOUTHEASTERN GUIZHOU

CELEBRATING CULTURE

Photos by Chan Yat Nin, He Shili & others
Article by Ling Qihui

Rivers meander between rolling mountain ranges in Qiandongnan (Southeast Guizhou) Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, giving rise to uniquely beautiful natural scenery and strong and pure ethnic customs. The prefecture is believed to have 158 festivals each attended by more than 5,000 people and 107 festivals involving fewer than 5,000 people. No wonder the place is known far and wide as the "Home of Festivals".

The region's ethnic festivals can be divided into three major categories. The first category consists of sacrificial ceremonies like the Guzang (Bull Slaughtering) Festival; the second category includes harvest festivals, such as the Chixinjie (Tasting New Grain) Festival; the third category is made up of social occasions such as the Lusheng (Bamboo Pipe) Festival with its lively festive atmosphere, grand gathering, and a wide range of activities and beautiful clothes. Visitors to the region will find the festivals particularly attractive. They found themselves intoxicated with the charms of festive celebrations.

DIVE IN BAMBOO MUSIC AT LUSHENG FESTIVAL

The "Lusheng", or bamboo pipe, is the most popular musical instrument among ethnic minorities in southwest China. The instrument has a history of more than 5,000 years and its early ancestors have been unearthed from tombs of the Warring States Period (475—221B.C.). Traditionally, a bamboo pipe consisted of six pipes. Improved ones can be made from 12 to 24 pipes. Historically it was played at sacrificial ceremonies but it evolved into an indispensable instrument in many ethnic minority activities and became a symbol of regional culture.

The Miao people in Qiandongnan alone comprise as many as 132 tribal branches while the Dongs in turn are divided into the Northern Dong and Southern Dong. They all maintain their distinctive identity by different costumes. This means there can be up to 1,000 different types of costume on display at the pipe festival.

The parade began early in the morning and soon the sound of bamboo pipes was heard. People in their festive best marched forward or danced to the accompaniment of the flutes. Silver ornaments pinned on their costumes jingled. Leading flute players included white-bearded elders and robust lads. The bamboo pipes, ranging from ones as short as a foot or as long as three metres, were all tied with a piece of red cloth, a beautiful feather or long, remarkable cogon grass on the top. However the costumes with meticulously embroidered patterns stole their thunder. There were long fluttering skirts, mini-skirts, pleated skirts, and "hundred-bird skirts" decorated with feathers; while the

Opening page: The elegant, exaggerated horn-shaped silver crowns worn by Miao women are always under the spotlight during the festivals (by Chan Yat Nin)

1. **At the Lusheng Festival, people play their bamboo pipes while dancing. The pipes can be as short as one foot or as long as three metres (by Chan Yat Nin)**
2. **A Miao woman sings a toasting song when welcoming visitors to the village (by Chan Yat Nin)**
3. **A man from Langde Miao Village runs across a heated iron plate with bare feet (by Chan Yat Nin)**
4. **At the Lusheng Festival in Kaili, the villagers hold a "fire dragon" around the campfire, singing and dancing jubilantly (by Chan Yat Nin)**

DIVE IN BAMBOO MUSIC AT **LUSHENG FESTIVAL**

men donned loose-sleeved gowns, baggy pants, armour and what not. I wished I had an extra pair of eyes! Women wore headgear, earrings, necklaces and horn-shaped silver crowns, silver patterned hats, silver neck rings, silver bracelets, and silver plates on the costumes as decorations. All the silver sparkled and shone. As the parade arrived at the meeting site, people cheered. Some 1,000 flutes were playing together, sending their tune to the sky. The flute players were followed by the parades from different towns and villages taking turns to perform on stage. This was an annual show and competition in bamboo pipe playing, singing and dancing.

Unless you have been to such a festive occasion, it is really hard to imagine that the "lusheng" is not only a musical instrument but also the symbol of the ethnic soul. Miao people told me that every Spring Festival, from the first day and lasting a whole fortnight, all the neighbouring towns and villages nosted bamboo pipe festivals that would last into the second or the third month in the year, or even the seventh and ninth months. There was always a rich festival atmosphere as people were clad in their holiday attire and danced to the bamboo pipes or wooden drums and staged horse and oxen races.

The festival went on and the melodious tunes of the bamboo pipes filled up every corner. Like everybody else, I became immersed in the great joy of the Bamboo Pipe Festival...

Time: August 18, or a specific day
Place: Miao villages in Qingman, Shanglangde, Nanhua, or Kaili City in Qiandongnan Prefecture
Ethnic groups: Miao, Dong, Ge, Shui, Yao, etc
Features: Organised by the local government. People wear their traditional clothes. Typical activities include bullfight, cock fight, birdfight, lusheng music and dance, performances and demonstrations of ethnic handicrafts.

1. **Old people are interested in song bird competitions during the Lusheng Festival (by Chan Yat Nin)**
2. **This girl has made fashionable additions to her costume (by Chan Yat Nin)**
3. **Miao girls express their different feelings for their dream lovers by using the Five-Colour Rice (by Chan Yat Nin)**
4. **A bull fight is the most violent event at the Lusheng Festival**
5. **Playing the bamboo pipes is not the privilege of males**
6. **The men striking the drums make a great contrast to the gentler women (by He Shili)**

YOUNGSTERS CHOOSE THEIR LOVERS AT SISTERS' RICE FESTIVAL

This festival originated in Taijiang County, known as the "heartland of the Miaos" as more than 90 percent of its residents belong to the Miao minority.

It is appropriate to say that most of the Miao clans are found in Qiandongnan Prefecture and the most beautiful Miao customs are seen in Taijiang. The silver hat a Miao girl wears weighs several kilograms. Silk threads concoct patterns of dragons, phoenixes, flowers and birds on their clothes. Silver plates are attached to both the front and back of their dresses. The silver necklaces with openwork carving are stacked up all the way to their chin. Heavy silver bracelets are a constant weight on their wrists. Even the umbrellas they hold are adorned with silver bells. The cost for a complete set of silver decorations may reach nearly 10,000 yuan. Of course, their silver decorations have been handed down from one generation to another. Usually mothers will pass their decorations to their daughters.

I wandered into the venue for the opening ceremony of the Sisters' Rice Festival. It was a world of shining silverware. I could hardly believe such a place existed in the world with so many silver artifacts and so many beautifully clad people dancing together. High pitched as they were, the bamboo pipes could not drown out the jingling of the silver decorations. Toward the end of the ceremony, Miao girls presented visitors and local residents with "sisters' rice" in five colours of red, yellow, white, dark purple and blue. This was made from glutinous rice steeped with wild plants gathered from the mountains. The rice gave out a gentle and delicate aroma of wild grasses.

There are many meanings for the "sisters' rice". Red rice symbolises prosperity in the villages; yellow rice suggests good harvests; white rice represents pure love; purple means the sun shines forever over the Miao villages, and blue is the colour of the Qingshui River. Since ancient times, young Miao ladies along the Qingshui River have maintained the custom of presenting the five-coloured "sisters' rice" as a way of expressing their love. The secret wishes of the girls are hidden in the rice. If a girl puts pine needles in the rice, it means she expects to receive in return embroidery needles and threads from the boy. If she puts bamboo hooks in the presents, she will be inviting umbrellas. If the bamboo hooks are covered, that means she hopes for more contact with the boy afterwards. A pair of chopsticks is an explicit message of courtship. If the girls include sprout of Chinese toon or coriander, their message suggests a wedding soon. Cotton in the rice is an expression of longing. However, if garlic and chili are in the rice, the girls are putting a stop to the relationship.

A wide range of colourful activities continue for three days. In addition, there is the highly competitive dragon boat race, a fierce rooster fight, the robust bull race and the solemn ancestor worship ceremony, which together offer a profound introduction to the customs and lifestyles in the "heartland of the Miaos".

Time: 15th day of the third month (lunar calendar)

Place: Taijiang, Shidong

Ethnic group: Miao

Features: This is the day Miao youngsters choose their lovers. Boys and girls will give Sisters' Rice to express their feelings. Other activities include drum dances, bamboo pipe playing, bullfight, cock fight, birdfight, antiphonal singing.

HIGHEST RESPECT FOR ANCESTORS

GUZANG FESTIVAL

Photos & article by Wu Dongjun

The most lively, moving and mysterious ceremonial occasion in the life of the Miao people is the Guzang (Bull Slaughtering) Festival. This is an occasion for the Miaos in Qiandongnan to offer sacrifices to their ancestors, and is held in the autumn or winter once every 13 years.

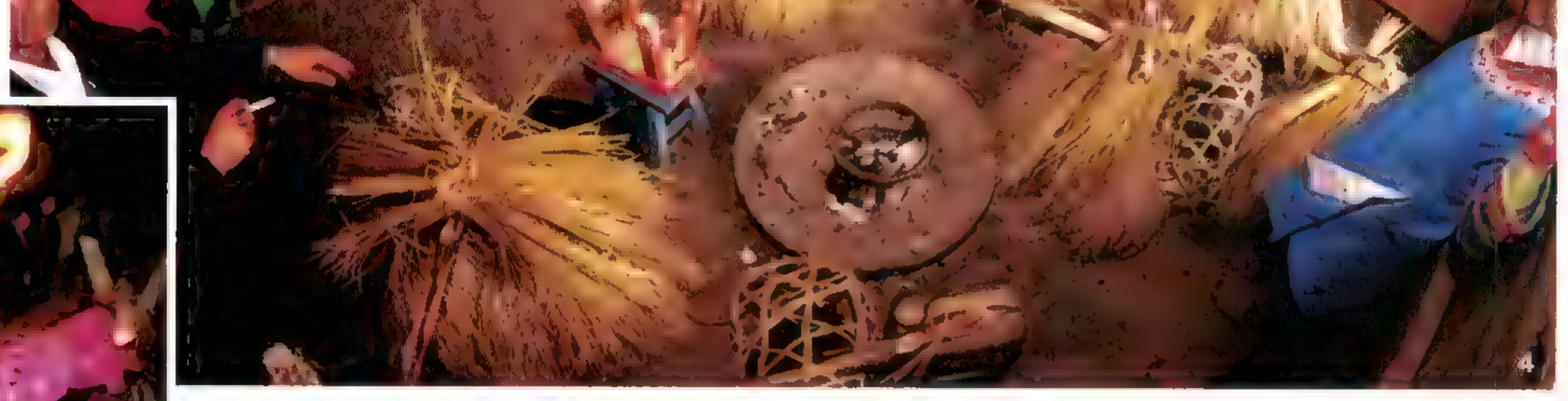
In early December 2000 I learned that Jiaqu Village in Rongjiang County was going to hold the solemn Bull Slaughtering Festival and so I pressed on to the Moon Mountain.

The date of the festival was decided four years ago. This meant villagers had been preparing for the occasion all that time. During this period, they saved money and raised poultry and animals in order to hold this grand ceremony. All families with the economic means would invariably offer a buffalo to their ancestors.

The festival has a leader but the ceremony is actually presided over by 15 masters of ceremony chosen by the villagers.

On December 4 and 5, villagers gathered together, many having travelled across mountain ranges. They all brought four kinds of gifts: millet ears, duck or chicken, rice wine and firecrackers. The host family was ready to receive visitors. They had prepared food and drinks and killed one to three pigs and dozens of ducks and chickens according to the number of visitors. Normally a family would host from 50 to 200 visitors. What struck me most forcibly was that once they had received a chunk of pork from one of the masters of ceremony, people

stopped eating vegetables until the end of the festival. The host families entertained visitors with a lot of wine and meat. Both visitors and hosts used a special terminology. They talked of "eating grass" instead of having meals, and "drinking water" instead of having wine. They got along amiably, not using a single swear word. Fighting and quarrelling were strictly forbidden and a sense of peace and love reigned over the village.



On December 6, the whole village took part in a rice offering ceremony. People once again crossed mountains to a hillside two kilometres from the village. They circled the field three times, dividing up the rice for visitors, who proceeded to eat the rice and pork as a way of showing their gratitude. When the ceremony of the day was over, some people took the bulls chosen as sacrificial offerings down to the Qingshui River to give them a bath. The beasts could only go to serve the ancestors of the Miaos if they were clean.

The next day, on the eve of the animal slaughter, the festival demonstrated a sense of liveliness and mystery. Villagers formed into a grand convoy to set off firecrackers. Carrying gifts, hunting rifles and fishing nets they drove the buffaloes to be killed in a parade, like an army in ancient times setting out for battle. At 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., every family had the tools ready for killing the bulls, usually made from wood, one set of tools for each bull. Later that night, the 15 masters of ceremony toured the families, recited something then said respectfully to the ancestors: "We are sending you buffaloes, to keep you company. We beg you to bless us with a happy life."

At midnight on December 8, the head master of ceremonies took the lead and slaughtered his buffalo then fired three gunshots, breaking the quietness of the night. In just five minutes, a total of 69 bulls were killed in front of the houses. The timing and speed shrouded the activity with a great sense of mystery. Then the ceremony masters who had been working through the night, recited prayers. Each owner of a slaughtered bull covered up his animal with a quilt, symbolising that the soul of the bull had gone, taking the silk quilt cover to the Miao ancestors. The people began to cut up the bulls, dividing them among relatives according to specific clan rules. The heads were hung for three days on the slaughtering tools. Afterwards all the buffalo heads were brought together, chopped into small pieces and divided evenly among all the village households. The owners kept the horns as souvenirs.

The strange and solemn bull slaughtering ceremony was now over. The Miaos had paid a heavy price for their sacrifices but they impressed visitors with their total sincerity, piety and simple and loyal love for their ancestors.

Translated by Huang Youyi

Time: Spare time during autumn harvest (once every 13 years)
Place: Miao villages in Qiandongnan Prefecture
Ethnic group: Miao
Features: A sacred, primitive festival of the Miaos to worship their ancestors. Dozens of bulls will be killed simultaneously, creating a bloody scene.

1. The leader of the festival wears a hat tied with dried fish. The Miaos believe fish can help them communicate with ancestors from the Yangtse River
2. Two days before slaughtering the bulls, a hill-circling ceremony is held. People distribute sticky rice and pork to thank guests
3. At midnight on the festival day, dozens of bulls are killed and new quilts are put over their bodies. People believe the animals' souls will carry the colourful covers to their ancestors
4. Relatives and friends from other villages also bring grain, chickens, ducks, and wine to celebrate the festival

A NATION OF MUSIC, A FESTIVAL OF SONGS
DONG DRUM TOWER FESTIVAL

Ever since that day when I first visited Liping County in the Qiandongnan Prefecture, a place regarded as "a typical Dong village in China", the drum towers, floral sedan chairs and the Dong's big chorus have left an indelible impression on my mind.

The drum tower in a Dong village is a symbol of a Dong settlement as well as of an ancient tribe. Almost all local festivals and important activities are held around the drum towers.

The Drum Tower Festival began in October under autumn drizzle. The muddy ground of the site did not dampen people's enthusiasm or the festive atmosphere. Some ten thousand Dong people, all in their traditional dress, together with sister ethnic groups such as Miao and Yao, joined forces. The Dong style of celebration was quite different from that of the Miao. Their singing dominated the event. The big chorus sung in different parts, in particular, has won an international reputation. The rich and resonant singing held the audience spellbound. Before the discovery of the Dong's big chorus, it was believed in Western music circles that choruses sung in different parts did not exist in Chinese folk singing. Such a belief has been proved wrong. Now, as soon as you enter a Dong village, you realise the Dongs are a nation of singers.

The concert that night once again warmed my heart. There were neither posh decorations nor expensive audio equipment. Even the lighting was not bright enough. It could by no means compare with concerts held in cities with all those glamorous stars and colourful lights. The programme opened with the big chorus. There was no conductor, no orchestra, the singing was sometimes gentle, sometimes high-pitched. The melody was so harmonious and agreeable. The imitation of cicadas' singing by the children was so lifelike; the singing accompanied by cow's leg-shaped fiddle and *pipa*, and chorus in falsetto fascinated the audience. Urged on by repeated calls of encore, the performers had to sing again and again.

During the three-day festival, we visited one village after another. We made a specific trip to see the Xianxing Tower at Yandong Township. It was the earliest form of a Miao drum tower, and the only one surviving in the whole area. There are four major types of drum towers, those with a hall, those looking like a pavilion, those with extended corridors and those with multi-eaves. In the Shaoxing Dong Village, there were five drum towers. No wonder it was called "The First Dong Village Under Heaven". Naturally it was a place we had to go and see. The elaborate bridges in Dong villages also fascinated us. They were practical yet beautiful. The most typical one was in Diping Village, ingeniously built without a nail or a rivet. This shows the great skills of the ancient Dong people.

Wherever we went, singing accompanied us. "Food keeps one alive, and songs cultivate the mind" is the most original interpretation of what music means to the Dongs.

Date: Selected day in October

Place: Liping County

Ethnic group: Dong

Features: Organised by local government, the festival is an event to showcase the traditional customs of the Dongs as well as promoting business activities. Performances include ethnic singing, dancing, fashion, handicrafts, and the coloured iron ring race.

1. Drum towers and ornate bridges are symbols of the Dong people and their culture (by Ouyang Changpei)
2. The striking Liping Drum Tower Culture Festival (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. "Qiang hua pao", the most exciting event at the festival, is regarded as "Oriental women's rugby" (by Chan Yat Nin)
4. The unique *pipa* song and dance of the Dong people from Hongzhou (by Chan Yat Nin)

1

SWEET TASTE OF TANGERINE FESTIVAL

I learned long ago that Congjiang in Guizhou is famous for its tangerines. When I got to Congjiang where the festival was going to be held, the whole place was already brightly decorated. The main performers at the festival's opening ceremony were of local minority nationalities. That year had seen a good tangerine harvest, and people just wanted to express their joy by singing and dancing. The Miao people of Basha, about whom I had heard so much, came to perform too. Carrying fowling-pieces, they danced elegantly on the stage. In the sunlight, their dark complexion seemed glossy. Large indigo trouser-legs and warriors' gait kicked up clouds of dust. They all sported a hair-do with a topknot protruding prominently. If they stood still, they would be mistaken for terracotta warriors in the mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shihuang. Next came the big chorus by the Dong people, well known overseas. Their singing reminded me of the chirruping of cicadas, a gentle river and leaping ripples of a stream... Then, to my surprise, girls carrying baskets of tangerines came to us. The yellow tangerines looked golden in the sunshine. As soon as I got one, I broke it open and stuffed two segments in my mouth. Oh my god! Juice spurted out. It was large, juicy, thin-skinned and without pips.

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The following day, we drove to Longtu, the largest production base of tangerines in Congjiang, where we could pick fruit in the orchards. There was also entertainment such as "carrying officials", bullfight and so on. As we approached Longtu, we saw stretch upon stretch of tangerine fields. The golden fruit set off by green leaves were most eye-catching. As soon as the coach pulled up, we got off and scattered; some visitors wanted to take part in "carrying officials", some rushed to see a bullfight, while others headed for the orchard. For a moment, I didn't know what to do. The bullfight must be exciting while the "carrying officials" reflected the lives of the local people.

At dinner, I had an opportunity to taste roast pork, a specialty of Congjiang. It had to be ordered hours in advance. At night, I lay in a medicinal bath, believed very effective in curing certain diseases. An elderly woman who prepared the bath water said her business had become brisk because so many tourists came for the festival, and if only the festival could be held every day.

Date: Around November

Place: Congjiang County

Ethnic groups: Miao, Dong

Features: Organised by local government, it features the customs of minority nationalities within Congjiang County, such as the Basha Miao Nationality activities, Xiaohuang Dong's big chorus, and "carrying officials".

1. Longtu Dong Village people welcome the Tangerine Festival with the traditional "carrying officials". The "officials", called "Dianningmeng" in the Dong language, are played by well-dressed young men. The sedan-chair troupe parades through the village, having great fun on the way (by He Sheli)
2. Visitors have to drink a cup of wine at the entrance to the host Dong village (by He Shili)
3. At the festival, Basha Miao men perform the unique drum-pulling race. Their characteristic hair-style and clothes also intrigue the audience (by He Shili)

MYSTERIOUS HARONG FESTIVAL

The Harong , or Drum Worshipping Festival, is one of the most important events of the Ge tribe.

The timing for the festival is decided by the tribe's Lunar Head. In this tribe, the Lunar Head is the spiritual leader while the Solar Head is the head of the village. Both the Lunar Head and the Solar Head are male.

The Harong Festival is an occasion for offering sacrifices to ancestors. The Ge ancestors worshipped "Zu Gu", a kind of drum made from a whole log of camphor wood with the inside dug out and both ends covered with ox hide.

On the day of the festival, the Lunar Head took out the drum. First, he burnt some incense in front of it while murmuring some words. I was told he was giving the reasons for moving the drum and an apology for disturbing the souls of the ancestors. After that four young men carried the drum to the village altar. Only then did the festival formally begin. Spread out on a table in front of the altar were offerings of chicken, duck, pig's head, glutinous rice, candles, joss sticks and papers resembling cash which are to be burnt for the dead. Two elders in white robes, their hair also wrapped with white cloth, sat in front of the drum facing east. Led by some elders, people began to dance gently to the accompaniment of music played with the bamboo pipes. The tune was slow and heavy. The festival lasted for three days and the two elders had to sit in front of the drum for the entire time, meticulously checking that each procedure was completed correctly. At the festival, a sacrificial ox was slaughtered. The locals called it "killing an elephant to offer ancestors".

Another interesting activity during the festival was the shooting of a bird known locally as Fadaniao (Flourishing Bird). Legend has it that a beautiful girl had been changed by the sun into this bird. Whoever shot the bird down from a tree would win happiness for the rest of his life; who shot its beak would have the gift of the gab; if they shot its breast they would become well-off; or if they shot its reproductive organ would have many children. Guided by the Solar Head, men were busy preparing to shoot the bird hung high in the tree with bows and arrows. In the shrine of each house were kept a small delicately made bow and arrows. This also indicated people's veneration for their ancestors. Even the batik clothes and head-scarfs of women were painted with a pattern of the sun. Did all those phenomena hint at something mysterious? For an ethnic group like the Ge without a written language, it would be difficult to find out the connections between them. We had to make wild guesses while taking part in their primitive activities.

The atmosphere of the Harong Festival was rather solemn. It indicated people's reverence for their ancestors, as well as hope for the future.

Date: Different in every village. Usually the festival is held every 50~60 years. In one place it is held every 13 years, and is decided by the head of the tribe

Place: Every Ge village in Chongxing Township, Huangping County

Ethnic group: Ge

Features: A festival to worship ancestors. Activities such as playing ancestral drums, lusheng dance and shooting birds are arranged by the tribal heads and elders

1. A Ge man dressed in traditional clothes plays a bamboo pipe (by Chan Yat Nin)
2. The Ge people believe the spirits of their ancestors permanently reside in the drums, which are highly respected. Only during the Harong Festival do they carefully take the drums outside (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. Playing vibrant music after worshipping village ancestors (by Chan Yat Nin)

1

GETTING DRUNK AT THE MIAO NEW YEAR

I have twice attended the Miao New Year, and what impressed me most was the experience of getting drunk.

The New Year is a traditional festival of the Miao people to offer sacrifices to their ancestors as well as celebrate the harvest. The timing for the New Year differs from place to place. Normally, it is held in the 10th month of the lunar calendar. There are three types of New Year, the Big New Year, the Small New Year and the Horse Tail New Year. Celebrations for the Big New Year are the grandest. On such occasions, Miao people put on their best costumes and kill pigs, sheep and chickens and catch fish as sacrifices to their ancestors. At the same time, all sorts of celebratory activities are carried out.

We arrived in Leishan County where the celebration was being held. To let us better experience local customs, the organising committee specially arranged for us to spend New Year's Eve in the Miao village of Paika. This village has a reputation for producing bamboo pipes. Its craftsmanship in making these musical instruments is widely known overseas. As we approached the entrance to the village, we saw lines of beautifully dressed Miao girls. Beside them was a long table, on which stood a jar of liquor, 13 drinking bowls and a pot of cooked glutinous rice. This was the major ceremony for greeting guests known as "Thirteen Gulps of Liquor". Every visitor had to drink from

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each of the 13 bowls of liquor. As a rule, anyone who stretched out to take the bowl would have to drink all its contents. However, the Miao girls were so hospitable they tried to pour liquor down our throats. Not prepared for this, liquor spilled all over our clothes. When we came to the final round of the Thirteen Gulps of Liquor, some of us were already red in the face. Then firecrackers began to explode and people started to sing. After an hour of the greeting ceremony, we finally divided ourselves into small groups and entered the village. Each group spent New Year's Eve with one family.

It was a unique experience for us to spend a Miao New Year with Miao families. Normally, the Miao people only eat highly flavoured and spicy vegetables. They seldom eat fish or meat. But things are different on New Year's Eve. At dinner time in the family I stayed with, there was a spread of food in clay bowls on the sitting-room floor, including traditional sour fish soup, chicken, duck, goose, mutton stewed with wild herbs and spices gathered in the mountains, dark smoked pork, and green pepper sauteed with meat. Before the dinner started, the host spread some liquor and some food on the ground to invite his ancestors to enjoy the meal. Then he lit some candles and joss sticks in the shrine. After that, he asked everyone to hold up liquor bowls and proposed a toast. Only elders of the family were allowed to sit while the rest squatted on the ground. Most food was too spicy, sour or salty for us visitors. However its aroma was very enticing. We clinked our liquor bowls with one another and began to eat. I noticed some of us opening mouths wide if the food was too hot. Some had to stuff cooked rice into their mouths if the food was too salty. Our expressions made the host and family members laugh. According to the local custom, women do not eat together with men. So they offered drinks and sang songs in turn. As soon as you put down your bowl or chopsticks they offered more. Once you had put down your bowl and chopsticks, you had to leave quickly. Finally, a fellow visitor and I managed to leave. It was already dark outside. Gusts of cold wind quickly sobered us. We could hear peals of laughter and the sound of firecrackers nearby. About 10 o'clock, as arranged, we went to the basketball arena.

When the time came to leave, locals held our hands, urging us to stay for the night to watch fireworks, sing love songs and join the dance party with a band of bamboo pipes and bronze drums. We would have loved to but on second thoughts decided to leave as we couldn't handle the liquor. Intoxicated, we waved goodbye to them and left with fond memories of the Miao village.

Date: Mid-tenth lunar month

Place: Leishan County

Ethnic group: Miao

Feature: A festival where the Miaos worship their ancestors, celebrate the harvest, and families and friends gather. Activities include lusheng dance and music, bullfight, and antiphonal singing.

1. Beautifully dressed Miao women in Leishan (by He Shili)
2. The heavy silver ornaments worn by the Miao women create a brilliant silvery world (by He Shili)
3. At the festival ground, people dance in time to the rhythm of lusheng music (by He Shili)
4. In the hands of Miao men, musical instruments come alive (by He Shili)

WATER CHURNING WITH PADDLES

DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

The Dragon Boat Festival of the Miaos held at the Jiangshui River falls on the 24th~27th day in the fifth month of the lunar calendar. This large scale festival is held in Shidong, Jiangxian County in Qiandongnan Prefecture.

The dragon boats on the Qingshui River were actually dugout canoes, each made of three huge logs. The one in the middle is called the parent canoe, usually made of an eight *zhang* (one *zhang* = 3.3 metres) log of Chinese larch or maple. The central part of the log is hollowed out. The logs for the auxiliary canoes were five to six zhangs long and lashed to the parent canoe. Dragon boats like these are extremely fast. When racing, they did look like dragons cutting through water.

Before the race, a ceremony, chaired by a village elder, was indispensable. Offerings included three bowls of liquor, a bowl of rice with some incense planted in it, and chicken, duck, fish and meat. Normally the village boats were stored in a veranda-like shed with a tile roof. When the time came, 20 to 30 young men carried those boats down to the water amid the sound of firecrackers. The elder put a dragon's head on each boat, then symbolically painted the eyes on its head. The dragon's head was carved from a two-metre piece of catkin willow wood. On top of the head perched a mynah or a carp between the two horns. Once the boats were in the water, locals hung geese and ducks all around the dragon heads.

Right after the ceremony, the race began. Each boat had 36 to 41 people, of whom 32 were rowers, and the rest looked after drums, gongs and firecrackers. Most eye-catching were those holding gongs. They were boys of seven or eight dressed like girls, with the youngest only five. To a bombardment of firecrackers, the rowers churned up the water with their paddles and the dragon boats shot off and raced forward. Spectators cheered for the dragon boats from their own villages. With the combined shouting, drums, gongs and firecrackers, there was a big commotion.

After the race, people stood in a circle with the drum at the centre, and began to dance. The girl dancers with silvery coats and embroidered skirts were particularly eye-catching. On the other side of the beach was a festival fair. There were all sorts of decorative objects, clothes, skirts, dried flower petal bags, silverware, earrings, bracelets and hairpins. We couldn't resist and bought some of them. It was so much fun, but sadly, I couldn't take the festival home.

Translated by Wang Mingjie

Date: 24th~27th day of fifth lunar month

Place: Laotun and Shidong in Taijiang County

Ethnic group: Miao

Features: An entertaining festival where people pray for peace and good harvest in the coming year. Activities include dragon boat racing, ten-thousand-people's drum dance, and antiphonal singing.

1. **The drummer sitting on the bow of the dragon boat is crucial for the boat's speed**
2. **The ducks and geese hung at the head of the dragon boats will be prizes for the champion (by Wang Miao)**
3. **Miao paddlers from Qingshui River strive mightily to win the race (by Chan Yat Nin)**

MINI-SKIRTED MIAOS' "VALENTINE'S DAY"

MAOREN FESTIVAL

To experience the Maoren Festival ourselves, we came to Kongshen and Konglie, two villages of the Mini-skirted Miao, nestled deep in the mountains in Qiandongnan Prefecture. It is difficult to find records about this tribe or their Maoren Festival from books or documents and one has to rely on information provided by the locals. Called "Laoshali" in the Miao language, the festival is a unique social event held from the second to fourth lunar months. During the festival, people of different ages, married or not, can invite their lovers or those who they like to the Maoren Hill, singing to each other and having fun.

At the entrance to Kongshen village, we saw all women in the village really did wear pleated mini-skirts! I was so surprised by their openness.

The main activities of the Maoren Festival took place on Maoren Hill. From the village, an even line of seven "maorens" (somewhat like scarecrows) standing on the mountain crest looked like a row of trees. The villagers told us the "maorens" were trysting place for lovers to meet. By the time we climbed to the top there were already lots of boys and girls gathering on the grassland, their smiling faces as bright as the sunshine. Then I heard some singing from a grove, the final notes tapering off in a low and tender tone. I silently approached the grove and saw a boy and girl singing to each other. They covered their faces while they were singing, and the girl held a scarecrow doll in her hand which I guessed was a gift from the boy. However, the sound of my camera shutter disturbed them. The girl turned her back to me, blushing quickly. Surprisingly, my face turned red too as though I had done something wrong. Later we heard the villagers were about to stage a "stealing the bride" ceremony. I feared there would be chaos. But to my surprise, both the bride who was being "stolen" and those who "stole" her were laughing all the way. The tradition has already become a fun episode in a modern wedding ceremony. In another custom of these Miao people, the bride has to carry a full container of water to her husband's home to show she is hard working.

Besides holding wedding ceremonies, another important purpose of the Maoren Festival is matchmaking. After expressing their feelings towards each other and romping in the mountains, the new lovers return to the village for an exhilarating night's singing and dancing. We also joined in the dancing group, learning the steps. But our dancing was never as attractive as the Miao women's.

Date: Selected days between the second and third lunar months

Place: Kongshen or Konglie Miao village in Liangwang Township, Rongjiang County

Ethnic group: Miao

Features: During the festival, people of both genders and different ages, married or not, can invite the ones they like for singing and fun on Maoren Hill.

1. A Miao woman welcomes visitors with wine from an ox-horn bottle (by Chan Yat Nin)
2. The Maoren Festival is always the day for many marriages. But the most interesting part is "stealing the brides". This lady is happy to be "stolen" by her husband's family (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. Returning from Maoren Hill, the villagers begin their all-night music gala (by Chan Yat Nin)

DONGS' WOMEN'S DAY
SAMA FESTIVAL

Before visiting the Qiandongnan Prefecture, I had only heard of the International Women's Day held every March 8. But the Sama Festival is really a big day for the Dong women. When I heard about the grand Sama Festival held in Rongjiang County, I promptly attended the event.

The county seat is surrounded by the beautiful and clear Duliu River, which passes the Chejiang Dong Village sited on the Chejiang "Daba" — a local term for a plain. The riverbanks are planted with hundred-year-old banyan trees, setting off the residences where the Sama Festival is held.

"Sama" in the Dong language means "great grandmother". Legend says that during the time of a matriarchal society there lived a brave female leader of the Dongs who had repelled several enemy invasions. She was highly respected by the people. However, she was killed in battle when the enemy's army proved too strong. Her people later granted her the title of "Sama", and worshipped her. To commemorate her, the locals select an auspicious day each year before the spring ploughing during the first to second lunar months or after the autumn harvest between the ninth and tenth lunar months. At first, people fashioned earthen mounds in the middle of the village as the place for worship. Later these were replaced by wooden huts. During the Qing Emperor Guangxu's reign (1871—1908), brick-built Sama temples appeared in the Dong villages. A half-opened black umbrella is put in the temple, with a pile of stones underneath it. This represents the Dongs living happily and united under the protection of Sama's spirit. Usually, a cypress or fir tree is planted or an evergreen plant called Qiannian'ai, indicating the enduring nature of Sama's soul. Almost all participants in the festival were married women, except for the sacrificial rites master. The sacrificial offerings are carefully chosen, and include hens, ducks and black pigs.

A loud explosion of firecrackers so surprised me I nearly fell from my chair. The festival had begun. Thanking the old Dong man, I rushed to the Sama Temple. Squeezing through the crowd, I entered the temple. A splendidly dressed old woman was presenting a cup of tea and incense to Sama. She let every woman who came to worship Sama sip a mouthful of "grandmother's tea". She also put a branch of Qiannian'ai or cypress tree on each woman's head. The villagers believed these branches, blessed by the sacrificial rites master, were lucky talismans. Swiftly I slipped into the crowd, had a branch placed on my head and drank a mouthful of fragrant "grandmother's tea". I also prayed to Sama secretly in my heart.

Then the women welcomed Sama out. They lit firecrackers three times and blew some wind instruments. A group of 20 women carried large black flags painted with white dragon or phoenix patterns, creating a vibrant atmosphere. The long procession followed Sama, played by an old woman carrying a half-opened umbrella, in a circuit of the village, finally arriving at Duoye Plain to sing together. Sama was encircled by young and specially dressed Dong women. Hand in hand they sang a song called "Duoye". Their singing was a form of prayer for Sama's spirit to protect their people,

prevent natural disasters and bring a good harvest and prosperity in the year ahead. During the one-week Sama Festival, all the male villagers do the women's housework. No wonder there were men in the streets carrying children on their backs and with baskets in their hands. The Sama Festival can also be called the Dong people's Mother's Day.

Date: Around November

Place: Chejiang Dong Village in Rongjiang County

Ethnic group: Dong

Features: Organised by local government, it is a festival celebrating the matriarchal society. Most participants of the festival are women, who pray for protection from the "Sama" (great grandmother). The women sing and dance on the Duoye Plain.

1. **The woman who carries the umbrella has the highest status in the village. She is called "Dengsa" which means "the person closest to Sama" (by He Shili)**
2. **"Sama", the most important god for the Dong people, is enshrined in the Sama Temple in the Chejiang Dong Village (by He Shili)**
3. **During the Sama Festival the Dong women dress up specially (by Ling Qichong)**
4. **Holding huge flags, all the female villagers gather before setting out for the parade (by He Shili)**
5. **The Sama Festival celebrates a matriarchal society. Though women dominate the occasion, men also devotedly worship "Sama", the common ancestral god of the Dongs (by He Shili)**

FESTIVALS IN SOUTHEASTERN GUIZHOU

Month	Day (s)	Festival	Nationality	Place
1st	1st~3rd	Spring Festival	Miao	Yongle in Leishan
2	1st~7th	Sama F	Dong	Long'e, Maogong, Shuikou in Liping County
3	1st~17th	Spring F	Miao	Paidiao in Danzhai County
4	2nd~4th	Spring F	Miao	Liujia Village in Kongqing, Danzhai County
5	4th~5th	Lusheng F	Miao	Guanying Hill, Lengshui Col in Lushan, Kaili City
6	4th~15th	Spring F	Miao	Wulipu in Danzhai County
7	4th~15th	Dragon Lantern F	Miao, Dong, Han	Rengong County Seat, Shuimei, Tianma, Longtian
8	5th	Lusheng F	Miao	Guige, Gaorong, Guijiu in Zhenyuan County
9	5th~7th	Lusheng F	Miao	Mianfangcang in Kaili City
10	6th	Drum F	Miao	Gaowu Village in Taijiang County
11	9th~15th	Dragon Lantern F	Miao	Chengguan, Shuangjing, Fahao in Shibing County
12	9th~15th	Floral Lantern F	Miao	Maxi, Zijing, Xinqiao in Shibing County
13	10th~12th	Lusheng F	Miao	Big Wind Cave, Old Man Village in Lushan, Kaili City
14	10th~12th	Spring F	Miao	Yangxian, Maniao, Paiji in Danzhai County
15	12th~13th	Lusheng F	Miao	Mandong Village in Qingman Township, Kaili City
16	12th~14th	Lusheng F	Miao	Tonggu in Majiang County
17	13th~14th	Lusheng F	Miao	Wanchaomatian in Kaili City
18	14th	Lusheng F	Miao	Shiqing Village in Zhouxi, Kaili City
19	14th~15th	Lusheng F	Miao	Dazhong Village in Zhouxi, Kaili City
20	15th	Lantern F	Miao	Taijiang County Seat, Shidong, Gedong, Paiyang
21	15th	Lantern F	Miao	villages in Jianhe County Seat
22	15th	Lantern F	Miao, Dong, Han	Chengguan in Jinping County
23	15th~16th	Huchangpo	Miao	Wanzhai in Lushan, Kaili City
24	15th~16th	Spring F	Miao	Wuliguan in Danzhai County
25	15th~17th	Lusheng F	Miao	Panghai, Wanshui, Zhangjia villages in Kaili City
26	15th~17th	Spring F	Miao	Changqing Street in Danzhai County
27	15th~17th	Spring F	Miao	Xingren Street in Danzhai County
28	16th~20th	Lusheng F	Miao	Lusheng Hall in Zhouxi, Kaili City
29	17th	Lusheng F	Miao	Wangchaolong Ground in Kaili City
30	17th~19th	Lusheng F	Miao	Yanzhai and Sanjiang in Kaili City
31	17th~19th	Lusheng F	Miao	Heba in Majiang County
32	Ermao	Lusheng F	Miao	Wengya Village in Yatang, Kaili City
33	Wushu	Zhuxi F	Dong	Zhuxishe Slope in Tianzhu County
34	1st~2nd selected auspicious day	Grandma F	Miao	Dongjiang and Guili in Rongjiang County
35	2nd	2nd	Bullfight F	Miao	Jianhe County Seat, Jiuyang, Jiugan
36	14th~16th	Sisters' Rice F	Miao	Pingzhai, Tonggu, Dachong in Shibing County
37	15th	Sisters' Rice F	Miao	Miaobang, Wemen, Shayazhai in Jianhe County
38	15th	Wrestling	Dong	Shuangjiang, Kandong, Gongshe in Liping County
39	15th~17th	Lusheng F	Miao	Gongtong in Leishan County
40	18th~20th	Tonggu Lusheng F	Miao	Yongle New Village in Leishan

Month	Day (s)	Festival	Nationality	Place
41	Every Chunshe	Singing F	Miao	Bailalixie Slope in Lushan, Kaili City
42	Shouhai	Fangu F	Miao	Qingmanqinglang in Kaili City
43	Every Zi/ Wu day	Spring F	Miao	Mt. Dingpa in Zhouxi, Kaili City
44	Ermao	Lusheng F	Miao	Baila in Lushan, Kaili City
45	1st Zhuchang day	Fangu F	Miao	Qingjiang Village in Danzhai County
46		Lusheng F	Miao	Gupa Slope and Tunshang Village in Shibing County
47	Spring Equino	Spring F	Dong	Long'e and Shuikou in Liping County
48	Worshipping	Summer	Dong	Long'e and Shuikou in Liping County
49	3rd	3rd	Sanyuesan F	Miao	Old City District in Kaili
50	3rd	Singing F	Dong, Han	Bailaao In Tianzhu County
51	3rd	3rd Month F	Miao, Dong, Han	Qimeng in Jinping County
52	15th	Wrestling	Dong	Four villages in Twin River, Liping County
53	19th~21st	Lusheng F	Miao	Haimi in Panghai, Kaili City
54	24th	Lusheng F	Miao	Xijiang and Kongbai in Leishan
55	24th	Zhaolong F	Miao	Danjiang and Langde in Leishan
56	27th	Climbing Slope F	Miao	Huangpiao in Huangping County
57	Zi/ Wu day	Climbing Slope F	Miao	Banxi Village in Gechong, Kaili City
58	Ist Zi Wu day after Qingming	Climbing Slope F	Miao	Xinlian and Langde in Leishan County
59	1st, 2nd, 3rd Wu day	Climbing Hill F	Miao	Danjiang, Wangfeng, Sanjiaotian in Leishan County
60	Touzi	gathering at Miaolong	Miao	Miaolng, Wengban, Miaolong Village in Huangping County
61	Toumo	gathering at Wangjiapai	Miao	Wangjiapai Village in Wengping
62	Mao day after Touzi	gathering at Jiaba	Miao	Jiaba Township and Pingzhai in Huangping County
63	Erwu	gathering at Baibaopo	Miao	Huangpiao Township in Huangping County
64	Qingming	Qingming F	Miao, Dong, Han	Nature village in Jinping County
65	4th	8th	SiyuebaF	Miao	Feiyun Cliff on East Slope, Huangping County
66	8th	Siyueba F	Miao, Dong, Han	Nature village in Sansui County
67	8th	Siyueba F	Miao, Dong, Han	Bangdong in Tianzhu County
68	8th	Singing F	Miao, Dong, Han	Sanjiang and Qimeng in Jinping County
69	8th	Singing F	Dong, Han	Tangfang Col in Jinping County
70	8th	Siyueba F	Miao, Shui, Han	Rongjiang County
71	8th~10th	Climbing Hill F	Miao	Leida Slope in Longchang, Majiang County
72	5th	18 days after Lixia	Singing F	Miao	Qingshanjie in Jinping County
73	5th	Dragon Boat F	Miao	Stone Cow Township in Huangping County
74	5th	Dragon Boat F	Miao	Longtian in Rengong County
75	5th	Dragon Boat F	Maio, Dong	Baishi in Tianzhu County
76	5th	Dragon Boat F	Miao, Dong, Han	Riverside villages in Jinping County
77	6th	Small Dragon Boat F	Miao	Pingning Plain in Shibing County

* F = Festival Lusheng = Bamboo Pipe Qingming = Pure Brightness Siyueba = 8th day of 4th month Liuyueliu= 6th day of 6th month Lixia = Beginning of Summer Chixinjie = Tasting New Grain

Month	Day (s)	Festival	Nationality	Place
78	24th	Big Dragon Boat F	Miao	Pingzhai in Shibing County
79	24th~26th	Dragon Boat F	Miao	Laotun and Shidong in Taijiang County
80	26th	gathering at Chong'an Town	Miao	Chong'an Town in Huangping County
81	28th~30th	Kanhui	Miao	Baizi Bridge in Longshan, Majiang County
82	Mao day in late month	Chixinjie F	Miao	West River in Leishan County
83	6th	6th	Liuyueliu F	Miao	Yongle in Leishan County
84	6th	Caigetang	Miao	Beside Cow's Bridge in Jinbaotuan, Zhenyuan
85		Liuyueliu F	Miao, Dong	Liangshang in Sansui County
86	6th	Singing F	Miao, Ha	Pingdi in Tianzhu County
87	6th	Liuyueliu F	Miao, Dong	Dunzhai in Jinping County
88	6th, 16th, 26th	Climbing Slope F	Miao	Wumen and Pingtangding in Jianhe
89	16th	Singing F	Miao, Dong, Han	Jiaopo in Sansui County
90	18th	Chixinjie F	Miao	Banxi in Kaili City
91	9th~20th	Climbing Mt. Xianglu	Miao	Huzhuang in Kaili City
92	20th	Drum F	Miao	Gaowu Village in Taijiang County
93	24th~26th	Kanhui	Miao	Bibo in Majiang County
94	Day after Ermao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Panghai, Kaishao, Kaitang in Kaili City
95	20th	Chixinjie F	Miao	Guiding in Kaili City
96	24th~26th	Chixinjie F	Miao	Kaihuai in Kaili City
97	Chumao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Jinbao, Aihe, Jiaoge in Zhenyuan County
98	Mao day in early month	Chixinjie F	Miao, Dong	Jiuzhai in Jinping County
99	Mao day in mid-month	Chixinjie F	Miao	Longtang in Shibing County
100	every Mao day	Chixinjie F	Miao	inbao, Aihe, Jiaoge in Zhenyuan County
101	Toumao	Chixinjie F	Miao, Dong	Jiuzhai in Jinping County
102	7th	13th	Pass of 7th month	Miao	City District in Kaili
103	14th	Chixinjie F	Dong	Gaozeng in Congjiang County
104	14th~16th	Bullfight	Miao	Wengding in Kaili City
105	15th	Chixinjie F	Miao	New City in Shibing County
106	15th	Mid-7th month F	Miao, Dong, Han	Nature village in Jinping County
107	15th~16th	Chixinjie F	Miao	Danjiang in Leishan County
108	15th~18th	Chixinjie F	Miao	Baiyang and Tonggu in Majiang County
109	20th	Singing F	Dong, Han	Lantian in Tianzhu County
110	20th	Singing F	Miao, Dong	Lianhuaping in Duma, Tianzhu County
111	20th	Singing F	Miao, Dong, Han	High Plain in Jinping County
112	21st	Lusheng F	Miao	Panghai in Kaili City
113	23rd	Bullfight F	Miao	Kaitang, Kaishao in Kaili City
114	24th	Lusheng F	Miao	Kaitang in Kaili City
115	The day of Horse/ Mouse	Climbing Yangniupo	Miao	Yangniu Slope in Zhouxi, Kaili City
116	Day after Ermao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Jiuzhai in Kaili City
117	Day after Ermao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Diwu in Kaili City
118	Day after Ermao	Bullfight F	Miao	Wanshui in Kaili City
119	4th day after Ermao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Wengxiang in Kaili City
120	5th day after Ermao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Kaihuai in Kaili City
121	6th day after Ermao	Chixinjie F	Miao	Panghai in Kaili City
122	Mao day in early month	Chixinjie F	Miao	Lianhua, Qiaogang, Gaoyan in Leishan
123	Zhongyi	Chixinjie F	Miao	Pingzhai, Xincheng in Shibing County
124	8th	15th	Ganping	Dong	Long'e, Gubang in Liping County
125	15th	Lusheng F	Dong	Gubang, Jitang, Pilin in Liping County
126	15th	Lusheng F	Dong	Xinhua in Liping County
127	15th	Lusheng F	Dong	Luoxiang in Conghua County
128	16th	Chixinjie F	Miao	Xijiang, Baode in Leishan County
129	9th	9th	Double 9th	Miao	Kaitang, Kaishao in Kaili City
130	9th	Wulidun F	Miao	Xinzhou, Wulidun in Huangping County
131	9th	Double 9th	Miao, Dong, Han	Nature village in Jinping County
132	9th	Drum F	Dong	Guandong in Congjiang County
133	10th	Bullfight	Dong	Shuidong in Tianzhu County
134	23rd	Masangxia F	Miao	Machangxiang, Masangchong in Huangping
135	26th	Chong'an River F	Miao	Chongan River in Huangping County
136	27th	Gulong Lusheng F	Miao	Gulongxiang, Daping in Huangping County
137	9th~12th	Hai day	Bullfight F	Dong	Yingli in Congjiang County
138	9th~12th	Hai day	Bullfight F	Miao, Dong	Tingdong in Congjiang County
139	9th~12th	Hai day	Bullfight F	Dong	Xiaohuang in Congjiang County
140	9th~12th	Hai day	Bullfight	Dong	Pinglou in Congjiang County
141		Hou Hai day	Melon F	Shui	Guyi in Rongjiang County
142	9th~10th	selected auspicious day	Miao New Year	Miao	Gaotong, Gunzhong, Gaolu in Rongjiang
143	10th	10th	Bullfight	Miao, Dong, Han	Shidong in Tianzhu County
144	Mao day in early month	Miao New Yea	Miao	Kaitun, Xintang, Baode in Leishan County
145	Chen day in early month	Miao New Year	Miao	Qiaogang, Zhangpi, Paili in Leishan County
146	Every 1st Tiger day	Miao New Year	Miao	Guiding, Gezhong, Zhouxi in Kaili City
147	After 1st Tiger day	Miao New Year gathering	Miao	Kaili City
148	Ermao	Miao New Year	Miao	Xijiang in Leishan County
149	Day of Mouse	Miao New Year	Miao	Taigong in Taijiang County
150	27th	Shili Bridge F	Miao	Dongpo, Shili Bridge in Huangping County
151	1th	1st Longchang day	Longchang Day	Miao	New YearMiaoXinnan, Nangao in Daozhai
152	winter	1st	Lusheng F	Miao	Xinde, Xinhua in Liping County
153	winter	15th	Small Miao New Year	Dong	Shengli in Jinping County
154	winter	Mao day in early month	Miao New Year	Miao	Zhanglei, Xiaohe, Qiaoluo in Leishan County
155	winter	Chou day	Miao New Year	Miao	Miao villages in Jianhe County
156	winter	30th	Dong New Year	Dong	Yaobo in Jinping County
157	12th	1st~3rd	Dong New Year	Dong	Reili in Rongjiang County
158		selected auspicious day	Bullfight F	Dong	Shangchong in Liping County

* All the dates in this list are according to the Lunar Calendar. The specific names for the day according to Chinese perpetual calendar.

A DATE WITH THE DONG ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Photos & article by Chan Yat Nin

Hello Liping, Congjiang and Rongjiang!

I have been longing to visit this area for many years. Since I first encountered the colourful customs of the ethnic groups living in southeast Guizhou Province in Southwest China, I have often visited the Miao villages nestled in the mountainous areas. I travelled many times along the Qingshui River and at the end of each journey, I always reminded myself: "I shall visit Liping, Congjiang and Rongjiang next time."

The Dong people live in southeastern Guizhou and the area bordering Guizhou, Guangxi and Hunan. Every settlement of this ethnic group has the characteristic landmarks of the pagoda-like drum tower and the roofed "wind and rain bridge" (Fengyuqiao). If you ask Guizhou people where you can find the most typical Dong communities, you always get the same answer: Liping, Congjiang and Rongjiang.

However, these places are deep in Guizhou's remote mountains and it takes two days to travel over muddy terrain to reach them from Guiyang, the provincial capital. A visit to the Dong communities remained a dream. Last year, I made up my mind to turn the dream into reality.

One day in October, we went to Liping via Rongjiang.

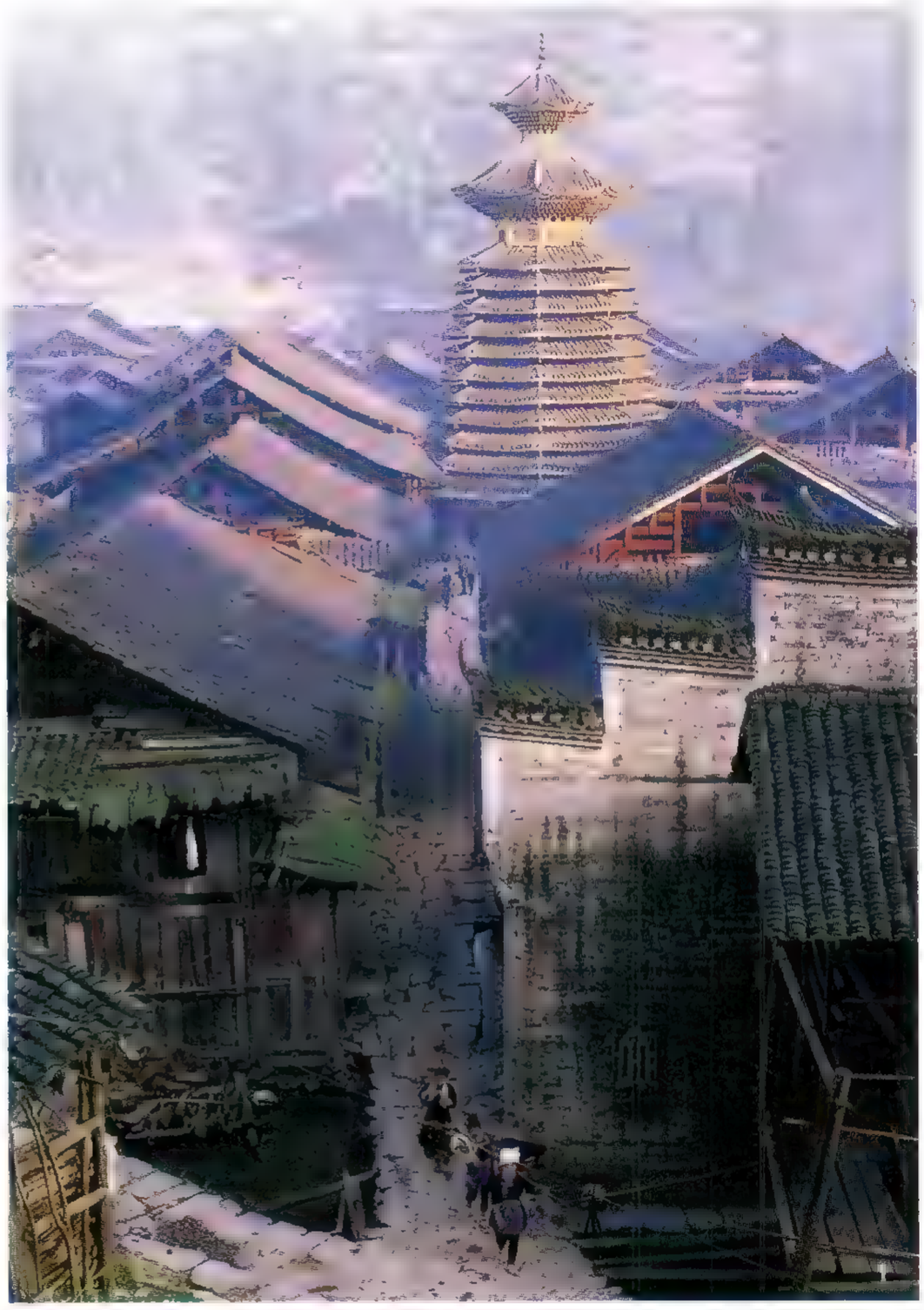
We arrived at the county town of Liping on the second evening. As it was the eve of a festival, all hotels in town were full. Fortunately, we were treated as VIPs and had our rooms reserved. Otherwise, we might have had to stay on the street for the night.

Floating in a Sea of Songs

The Drum Tower Culture Festival opened formally the next day. For the grand ceremony, thousands of Dong people performed songs and dances. For me, the most attractive items were the various colourful costumes worn by people from different parts of the county. Before coming here, I had seen Dong women from Chejiang wearing plain dresses decorated with coloured thread. Now I realised the clothes of different Dong communities varied greatly. Some were simple and elegant; others were dazzlingly gorgeous.

The chorus performance started. I had wanted to see such a show for myself for a long time. Some 2,000 performers, male and female, from 40 singing troupes staged the grand chorus. Their beautiful voices and harmonies deeply impressed me.

The Dongs are renowned as singers. Everyone is born with a talent for singing, and many traditional songs have been passed down from generation to generation. At the concert held that evening, the young singers from Dong villages won over the whole audience. Two singing groups, one from Hongzhou and the other from Shangchong, were particularly popular. The audience would not let them go until they gave encores. The two teams favoured different styles both in singing and dress. The Hongzhou singers sang light tunes at a high pitch, using falsetto. Their clothes were simple but in striking colours, with a few silver ornaments. Both their singing and costumes highlighted their youthfulness. In contrast, the singers from Shangzhong wore heavily decorated traditional dress, with embroidered coats and skirts. Each wore many silver ornaments, festooning the front of their costumes like an old general's armour. Their shoes were peculiar too. With sharply turned up toes, they looked like those modern styles worn by city girls today. The young women sang and moved slowly while each played a three-stringed zither, or the Dong pipa.



Tasting Hot Salted Fish in a Dong Village

Most Dong villages are built beside water at the foot of a mountain. Compared with the Miao villages that I'm more familiar with, the Dong settlements are more sophisticated, with a kind of elegance. This ethnic group originated from the ancient Baiyue tribe. As a sub-tribe of the Xi'ou branch of Baiyue, they moved southwest along the Yuanjiang River, a tributary of the Yangtse River, during the Qin and Han Dynasties about 2,000 years ago. Among the ethnic minorities in southwest China, the Dong people have a comparatively high level of cultural attainment. On one hand, they have absorbed the essence of the Han civilization; on the other, they retain a strong hold on their unique traditional culture. That is why the Dong customs remain so natural, simple yet amazing today. They stand as steadfast as the columns of the drum towers and will be able to resist any modern cultural aggression.

Dimen is a very large village. It used to be called "Qiansan Dongzhai", meaning a Dong village with 1,300 households. When we arrived, the villagers welcomed us warmly. Young men and women played bamboo flutes and sang and danced, displaying in full the talents inherited from their ancestors. We were treated with lunch, my first Dong meal. Among the typical Dong dishes were salted fish and pork, both very tasty and hot. The fish was prepared in a special way. Put a layer of fish in the bottom of a jar or a new wooden barrel; then spread a mixture of salt, fermented glutinous rice, Chinese pepper and hot pepper followed by another layer of fish. When the jar is filled with fish, layer after layer, it is sealed and stored until it is required. The fish

can be preserved for years. The villagers made toasts but did not force their guests to drink. Here I felt relaxed. On other occasions I have often felt obligated to eat or drink because of my host's enthusiasm.

As we walked out of the village the people sang a farewell song. My feet were reluctant to leave, seemingly bound by an invisible string made from the song.

Five Drum Towers and the Museum Village

After driving 70 km towards Congjiang, we arrived at Zhaoxing, a Dong settlement famous as the "First Village Under Heaven". Viewed from the top of a hill, the village crowded with wooden houses looked like a small city. Rising above the houses on poles were five drum towers, each representing a different clan. The village also has a theatre, a song ground and five covered bridges spanning the rivers and streams. We lodged in the village, immersing ourselves in the ancient cultural atmosphere.

Tang'an is a small village built on a hill eight km from Zhaoxing. It has been selected as one of Guizhou's four ethnic museums. As soon as I entered the village, I knew why it has been given such an honour — the settlement had been perfectly preserved with its traditional style intact. All the houses were wooden structures raised on poles,

Previous page: Zhaoxing in Liping County is known as the "First Dong Village Under Heaven". The village boasts five typical drum towers, which represent the five clans of "Benevolence, Righteousness, Etiquette, Wisdom, and Faith"

1. **This exquisite Qing Dynasty drum tower in Zengchong is the most outstanding of its kind in the Dong village**
2. **The Duliu River, an important water source for the Dong villages, is emerald green and extremely clear**
3. **Wells in Dong villages are unique. In this picture, villagers fill their containers from water gushing from a gap in the rocks at a well**
4. **A warm welcome from the Dong people. This lovely little girl poses in a classroom in the Dimen Dong Village**
5. **Gaozeng Dong Village in Congjiang County is famous for its passion for music. The Dong people here are born singers and musicians**

2

there was not a single modern building, and the streets were paved with stone slabs. When we entered one of the drum towers, the villagers who were warming themselves around the stove stood up to offer seats to us. They were so polite and honest. I was thirsty, so I walked to a well for some water. It was a Dong-style stone trough well. Carved out of blue stone, the "well" had a long ladle and a trough. The trough was fixed into the cliff at the height of about a metre to channel the spring water out; from the grooves in the trough, water ran into a person's mouth below or a bucket. It was an neat design.

Living Clay Figures in Basha

After leaving Zhaoxing, we drove towards the Guizhou-Guangxi border to visit the Dong village of Diping. We came here particularly to see its wind and rain bridge, considered the best of all Dong ornate bridges. We saw the bridge in the distance outside the village. In addition to the long covered way, it has three towers built on it, making it look very much like the Dongs' drum towers. It is really something special.

I decided to make another dream come true: to visit the Yongsha tribe. It turned out the tribe was only five km from the county seat, with State Highway 321 running through their village. It is unimaginable that a village with such convenient access to the outside world has not been "modernised". But the Yongsha remain unchanged today. Their men all tie their hair on the top of their heads, like the clay figures unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221—207 B.C.).

Though most residents of Congjiang are of the Dong ethnic group, there are also many Miao villages. Wujia Village is one of them. Male villagers wear headgear as ancient as that of the Yongsha, though not quite the same style. The Miao people here have absorbed Dong culture in many ways. They use the shiny Dong cloth to make clothes, and women's decorations and hairstyles show a strong Dong influence. Before I came to this area, I had learned to tell whether a woman was a Miao or a Dong from her hairstyle. If she ties her hair right up on her head she is a Miao and if her hair knot sits on one side she is a Dong. But now, visiting a Miao village in a Dong community, I found it was hard to tell the difference.

We set off from the county seat and drove north upstream along the Duliu River until we reached the reservoir. We then boarded a boat and sailed to the conjunction of the Duliu River and its tributary, the Sizhai River. We disembarked and walked five kilometres along a muddy trail. After going through a forest, suddenly we saw a wonderland in front of us. Neat rows of raised houses with a colourful tower standing at the centre of the village. Most amazing were the huge racks on which golden crops were hanging. Shimmering in the sunshine, they extended as long as half a kilometre. These were the most impressive crop-drying racks I had ever seen.

What has made the village famous, however, is its successful population control. Using a secret traditional therapy, the village automatically practises family planning and maintains a zero population growth. Thanks to their wise choice, the villagers can fully enjoy their natural resources and live a well-to-do life.

Moved to Tears By Gaozeng Singing

Congjiang has two other famous Dong villages: Gaozeng and

Zengchong. The latter has a magnificent drum tower, recognised as the "King of Drum Towers" and listed as a cultural relic under state protection. Because of its remote location and the difficult access, few outsiders have even seen the drum tower. We arrived in Congjiang in the rainy season, so it was impossible for us to reach the village. When I heard this bad news, I was so disappointed I could not help hitting my chest with my fists.

The flat, smooth road to Gaozeng reassured us. The village is noted as the heartland of singers and dancers. During my visit, I saw the best performances given by its men and women. There were many ancient songs, grand choruses and moving melodies accompanied by ox-leg zithers. The singing was so touching, each piece moved me to tears.

Romantic Dating

Rongjiang is the cradle of Dong culture, and the dialect spoken by the people living in the Chejiang Plain, where the county seat is situated, is considered the standard Dong language. To me, the village of Chejiang was a model Dong settlement. Singing for a date is called "xingge zuoyue", literally meaning "walking on the songs and

1. A man with a unique hairstyle of the ancient Basha tribe
2. An elaborately dressed lady of Dimen Dong Village
3. Only the headman of each Dong village has the authority to climb the wooden ladder to the top of the drum tower and beat the drum to summon all the villagers
4. Isolated from the world, Zhanli Village in Congjiang has preserved its fascinating customs

sitting on the moon (or sitting at night)". After seeing one such get-together, I came to the firm conclusion the love life of the Dongs is the most free and romantic of all China's ethnic groups. We visited Chejiang Village in darkness. In a family's living room, we saw a group of young men and women. The men were playing Dong pipa and ram's-leg zithers (smaller than a ox-leg zither) and the women were singing while making shoe soles. According to Dong tradition, when a girl reaches dating age, young men admirers sing songs such as Walking Through the Village and Knocking on the Door outside her house on moon-lit evenings. If the girl likes the boy, she opens her door and lets him in. The young man then sings a song to ask for a cup of tea; the young woman offers him a seat and serves him tea. The two then start a dialogue in song. If they find they have a lot in common, they make another date. After many dates like this and when they know they are in love with each other, the young man entrusts a go-between to visit the girl's family. Very

often, the girl dates more than one man at a "xingge zuoyue" party. It's an honour for her to "sit and sing" with several men at the same time.

The party we encountered, however, was not for any particular couple. It seemed the young people had gathered to have fun. Times are changing, I guess, and the dating formalities of the Dong youngsters will not remain unaffected. It is very possible in the near future the romantic "xingge zuoyue" will become a cultural relic.

Exquisite Handicrafts

Rongjiang is not only the cradle of the Dong culture, but was also the first stop of the Miao people when they moved into Guizhou from the Yangtse River valley in ancient times. Legend has it the Miaos spread to other parts of the province from Rongjiang (called Guzhou in the old days). I wanted to visit two of the Miao branches, the Bainiaoyi (Hundred-Bird Cloth) at Moon Mountain and the Duanqun (Mini-Skirted) in Kongshen and Konglie.

Once at a friend's home, I saw an overcoat made of batik and a hundred-bird cloth he had brought back from the Moon Mountain. Their unique designs captivated me.

We walked along the road beside the Duliu River to reach Xinghua Township of the Shui ethnic group, located in a rugged part of the Moon Mountain. The river was crystal clear and the scenery on the banks attractive. A group of Miaos came down the mountain from Baiba Village, their appearance showing they had walked a long distance. To protect their hundred-bird clothes, they carried them in their arms and put them on when they reached the riverside. They also brought with them a huge batik banner, the kind I had wanted to see for a long time. While one of them held the banner, the others played their ram's-leg zithers and danced. The hundred-bird clothes and the batik banner fluttered rhythmically, displaying their extraordinary charm. I would have liked a couple of pieces for my collection. But whatever I offered the Miao group leader, he firmly refused. In the end, he gave me a churlish look and held his sword high above his head. I regretted not having come to the Moon Mountain 10 years earlier, when these treasures were not yet so difficult to get.

Making a Mini-Skirt

On our way back from Rongjiang, we went to Kongshen and Konglie, though the road there was very bad. But when I saw the Mini-Skirted Miao in Kongshen, I knew it was worthwhile. The women in Konghsen wear skirts 17 inches long, revealing their long legs. The skirts are made of many layers of black cloth with numerous pleats on each layer. The local women believe the more layers a skirt has, the more beautiful it looks, so they always give them as many layers as possible. I thought the Miao women in their short skirts looked very much like a Black Swan in the ballet Swan Lake. A friend told me a story about Miao skirts. Long, long ago, when the Miao women worked in the paddy fields, they found their skirts too short. When they bent down to replant rice, their bottoms were exposed. So after the busy season, they held a party to express their regret and aske their fellow villagers for forgiveness. There is no further explanation on how the festival eventually became the Maoren Festival, the Miaos Valentine's Day. Maybe no such a legend exists and is only someone's idea of a joke.

In the village, we saw the whole process of the Miao women making their skirts, from spinning to weaving and to sewing. Their method was very basic. To make the 100 pleats, they washed the cloth in rice solution, folded it by hand and fastened it on a board with bamboo strips and rattan. When the cloth was dry, it held its pleated shape.

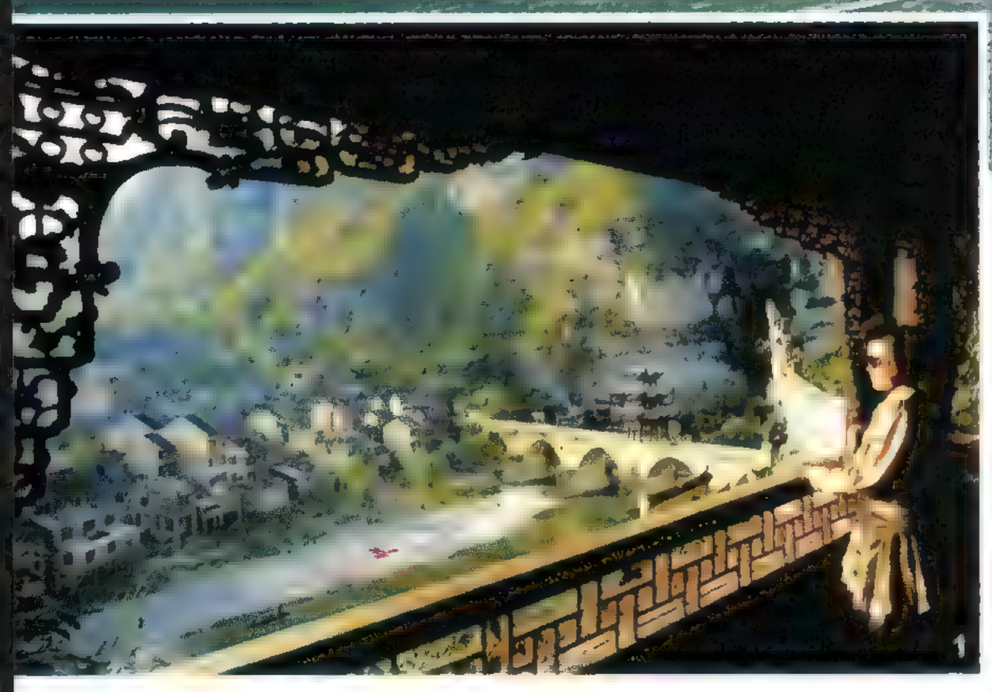
Konglie Village lies even deeper in the mountain. Its houses are built on the high slopes, following the contours. We spent a night in the village. Lying in a raised house and listening to the various noises of domestic animals, chickens and insects, I felt I was attending a concert of heavenly music. I slept soundly that night, my last night among the Dong communities.

Translated by Gloria Shang

1. Flat land is rare in Guizhou. The Chejiang plain is therefore an important place for the Dong people to grow food
2. The Dong people like to make their own "Dong cloth". After being dyed and starched by natural plants and repeatedly beaten, the cloth eventually becomes shiny
3. In Kongshen, the "hometown for mini-skirts", Miao women use a traditional pleating method. The skirts must be repleated after washing
4. Skirts worn by Miao women are usually 17 inches in length

CRUISING THE WUYANG RIVER

Article by Ouyang Chaoqun [illegible]

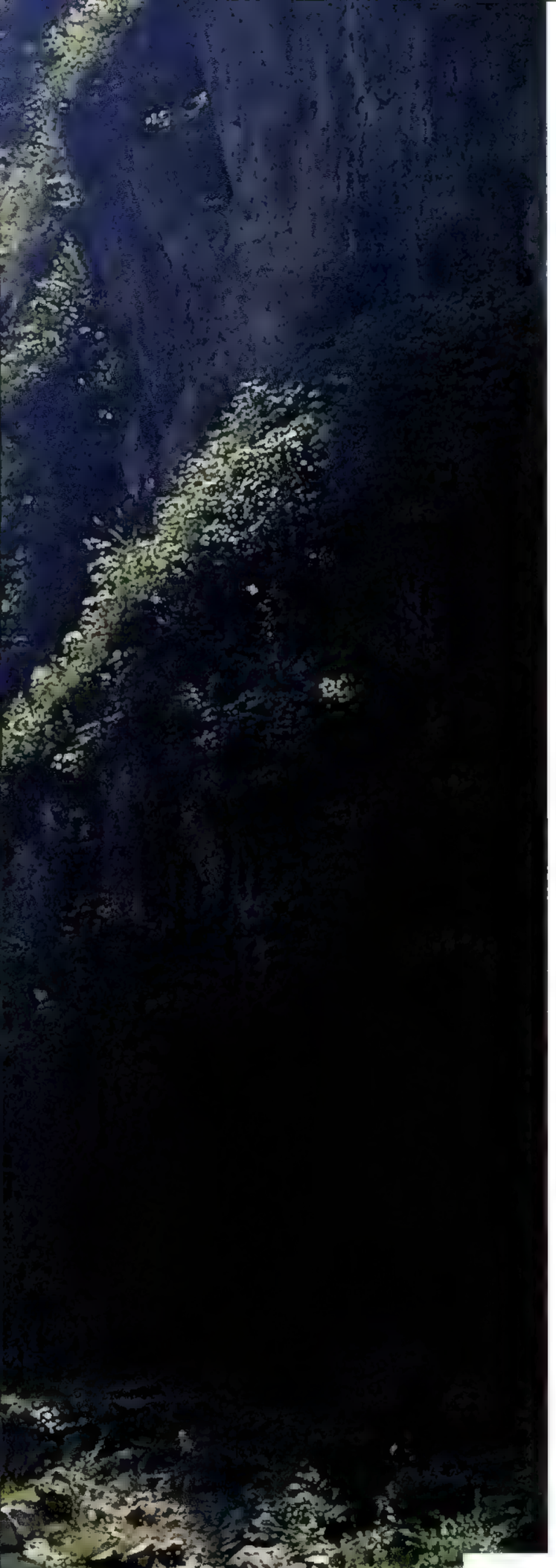


If you have visited the Yangtse River's Three Gorges, world-renowned for its sheer cliffs and towering mountains, or south China's Guilin which enjoys the reputation of having China's best scenery, you may think no other scenic place matches them. However, if you take a trip along the Wuyang River in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province, its beauty will astound you, combining the grandeur of its own Three Gorges, the elegance of the Lijiang River and the unique karst topography of Guizhou.

The Wuyang River's Three Gorges — Majestic and Delicate

Also known as the Wushui River, the Wuyang originates in Weng'an County in Qiannan Prefecture. Entering the western part of Hunan Province after passing through Huangping, Shibing, Zhenyuan, Cengong and Yuping Counties, it empties into the Yuanjiang River at Qianyang in Hunan. The Wuyang River is now a national tourist attraction, and for tourism purposes is divided into two parts. The Upper Wuyang Scenic Zone refers to the section of the upper reaches from Huangping County to Shibing County; and the Lower Wuyang Scenic Zone is where Shibing and Zhenyuan Counties meet. The 35-km lower zone is centred around the Wuyang River's Three Gorges-starting in the west at Wengpeng Cave in Shaping, Shibing County, and flowing into Wuwang Cave in Bantan, Zhenyuan County, in the east.

In ancient times, the Wuyang was very famous, but unsuitable for boat travel because of its rapids and sheer cliffs. In 1980,



construction of the Hongqi (Red Flag) Reservoir between the Xixia (Western Gorge) and the Longwang (Dragon King) Gorge was completed. As a result, the water level on the upper reaches of the river rose by 50 metres, and the long, narrow Wuyang Lake was formed. Where once the Longwang Gorge and Zhuge Gorge had many shoals and rapids, they are now as tranquil as mirrors, and the Wuyang River is attracting more and more tourists.

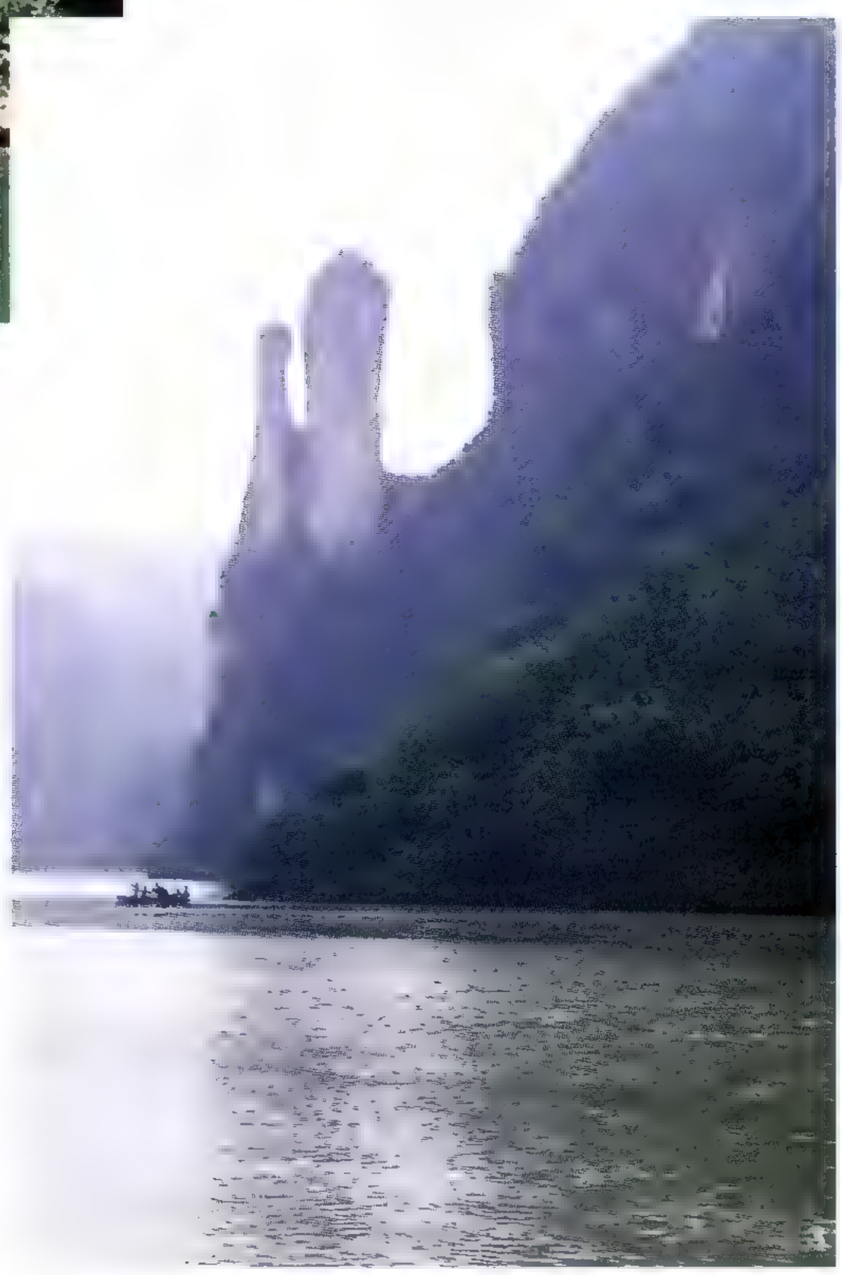
As the upper and lower reaches have different scenery and places of historical interest, and are not connected with each other, tourists usually visit them separately. So did I. I visited the lower Wuyang first, and then the upper river. I felt quite differently about the two areas. As it has a railway station, the famous old city of Zhenyuan is the tourism centre for both. The Wuyang River runs through the ancient city connecting Hunan and Guizhou Provinces with the Yangtse River, and brought prosperity to Zhenyuan.

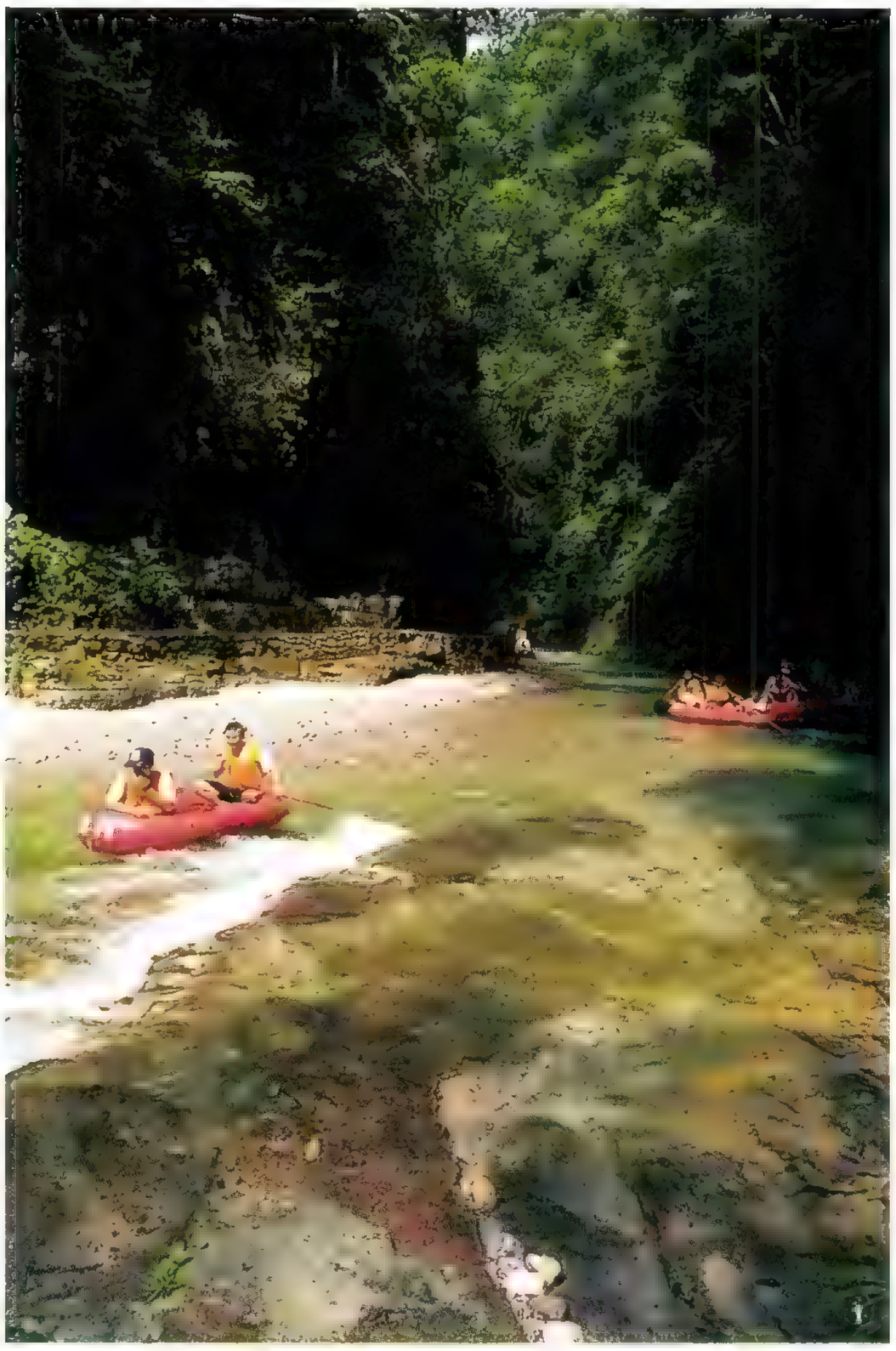
Some 15 km west of Zhenyuan, visitors board a boat at Yingbin (Guest-Welcoming) Harbour for a tour of the Wuyang River's Three Gorges. Working against the current, the boat soon enters Menghuo Valley, where 72 oddly shaped peaks stand side by side reflected in the water. Soon afterwards the boat enters the main part of the Three Gorges—Dragon King Gorge.

This gorge is noted for its numerous features. The most beautiful are the Three-level Hanging Waterfalls, some 50~60 metres high. The most impressive sight is the Peacock Rock by the water, composed of two weird peaks, one tall, and the other short, that look like a peacock raising its neck with its tail half spread. Legend has it that long ago a peacock drinking at Dragon King Gorge was so struck by the scenery that it could not spread its tail fully. As time went by, it petrified and now stands there forever.

Travelling along the river, you can see the mountains reflected in the water, and lush bamboo groves on both banks sway in the breeze, making tourists feel as if they're travelling through a scroll painting. Gradually the river becomes narrower and narrower, but just as you think you can go no further, the boat turns a corner and the river carries

1. Surveying the ancient city of Zhenyuan and the Wuyang River from an old pavilion at the Qinglong Cave (Er Dongqiang)
2. The Wuyang River combines the grandeur of the Three Gorges, the elegance of the Lijiang River and the unique karst topography of Guizhou (by Peng Bangxiang)
3. The striking Peacock Rock stands in the Dragon King Gorge (by Ouyang Changpei)
4. The Upper Wuyang River features faster currents as well as more scenic highlights (by Ouyang Changpei)





on. This is described in a poem: "Just as the weary traveller despairs of finding a way, a wonderland comes into view." Here the river is only 20 metres wide, and it seems as if the precipices on both sides are about to meet. All of a sudden, I saw a glimmer of light. This was the Strip of Heaven, a famous spot on the Wuyang River.

Soon after we came upon Gaobei Lake, with a Miao village on the shore. Situated at the foot of a hill and beside a stream, peaceful Gaobei Village is surrounded by green trees, and looks like a fairytale land far from the turmoil of the world.

Then the boat enters the Zhuge Gorge, where springs spurt from bamboo-covered cliffs, and falling from lotus-leaf-shaped precipices, form thousands of silvery threads.

The boat returns along the original route as far as Hongqi (Red Flag) Power Station. Under the 60-metre-high dam spanning the river is the West Gorge. Though this gorge is not as vast, deep or serene as the Dragon King and Zhuge Gorges, it has scenery of exceptional charm. This section of the river valley, with 100-odd waterfalls, has 15 dangerous shoals and only flat-bottomed boats can navigate it.

Birdsong Over the Wuyang River

After a tour of the Wuyang's Three Gorges, I felt inspired to see more as if the river's impressive scenery. The 26 km of the Upper Wuyang Scenic Zone start at Guanqing Rock, nine kilometres west of the Shibing County seat, and end at the Yindi Dam. Compared with the lower section, the upper stretch is wilder and more imposing, with many bays, oddly shaped pinnacles, monkeys and birds. Here dozens of peaks, lush bamboo groves and forests line the Wuyang. The trees are more numerous and the crags higher and steeper. Sometimes jagged rocks create leaping waves; then the riverbed becomes smooth, and the waters are calm and tranquil.

I was surprised to find there are also three gorges on the Wuyang's upper reaches. If you take a boat trip from the Guanyin Power Station Dam, you can feast your eyes on the beautiful landforms of Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) Gorge, Wangfu (Yearning for Husband) Gorge and Bottle Gourd Gorge, plus dozens more highlights.

Along this short section of the river, there are 36 bays of various sizes, more than double the number on the lower reaches. Sheer precipices flank the river's narrow course, and visitors can clearly hear birds singing. Karst topography can be seen everywhere. One bank is higher than the other, the difference being 200~300 metres. The weirdly shaped peaks will fascinate visitors.

Rafting on the Shanmu (Fir) River and Panoramic Views from Mt. Yuntai, many tributaries of the Wuyang are as attractive as the river itself. The Shanmu River in Shibing County is one of them. Lined with green hills, the Shanmu River is known for its clear water. In recent years, many visitors have opted to raft along the river and it has become one of Guizhou's most popular

tourist destinations.

Rafting along the Shanmu River is very appealing. Usually two people ride in a small rubber boat on the river. This is perfectly safe, and suitable for both old and young. It is an ideal activity for lovers and newlyweds. Even falling into the river is regarded as fun. A line from a poem reads: "If you don't go into the water of the Shanmu River, how can you know if it's sweet or not?" Many tourists jump into the river to find out.

You mustn't miss Shanmu Peak after rafting on the Shanmu River. You can climb up through a fir forest to the peak, which offers is a panoramic view of the ranges of Mt. Yuntai towering one above the other.

Mt. Yuntai covers an area of 300 sq km, with its summit 964 metres above sea level. The solitary peak piercing the clouds has a flat terrace at the top, hence its name Yuntai, or Cloud Terrace. The primitive forests on Mt. Yuntai are dense. Anyone who has climbed this green mountain will easily understand why the waters of the Shanmu River are so clear and why those of the Wuyang River are so blue.

Translated by Kuang Peihua

1. The Shanmu River, a tributary of the Wuyang River, is a popular rafting destination (by Ouyang Changpei)
2. Scenery as subtle as a Chinese wash-painting can be enjoyed from Mt. Yuntai on the Shanmu River (by Li Youxiang)

SOUTHEASTERN GUIZHOU TRAVEL TIPS

Article by Ling Qihui

With 42% of forest cover and 76% of its people belonging to minorities, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture is an area blessed with superb natural landscapes and a wide range of rich and colourful ethnic customs and culture.

Three Major Scenic Areas

There are three alternative ways to appreciate natural scenery and customs of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture:

1. **Natural landscapes in State-level Scenic Areas** ~ Upper and Lower Wuyang River, Shili Ancient Gorge in Chongan, Feiyunya (Flying Cloud) Cliff—No. 1 Cave in southern Guizhou, Mt. Yuntai, Zhenyuan Famous Historical City, and ancient residences of Qinglong Cave. Besides, the Gejia ethnic tribe living along Chongan riverbank in Huangping County and the Miaos in Huangping also have interesting customs.
2. **Cultures and customs of the Miaos** ~ Kaili City, the capital of Qiandongnan Prefecture, is conveniently connected by expressways and other transportation. To gain an overall understanding of the prefecture, you may first visit the Qiandongnan Prefecture Ethnicity Museum in Kaili. There are some Miao villages which you cannot miss: Shanglangde—a famous natural Miao village. Shidong in Taijiang—the hometown for Miao silver makers, Miao villages in Tonggu Village—birthing place of farmers' paintings, and Nanhua Miao Village—the only tribe in Qiandongnan Prefecture where all people believe in Christianity. Moreover, you may appreciate the famous Miao stannum embroidery. The Miaos can make colourful patterns with thin stannum threads. The Jianhe Hot Spring in Jianhe County is a rare radon and sulphur hot spring. The local Miao people have the custom of naked bathing in the hot springs, If you are interested, you may enjoy with them ,too.
3. **Cultures and customs of the Dongs** ~ Areas like Liping, Congjiang, Rongjiang, Tianzhu, and Jinping counties are best places to see the Dong cultures. Tourists can enjoy the big chorus and operas of the Dong people, and pay visits to the drum towers, unique Dong bridges, Duliu River, fields along Bazhou River, and Tiansheng Bridge.

- **Congjiang County:** The bridge built in the Gaozeng Dong Village is characteristic, which functions as a water drainage. The 13-storey Drum Tower in Zengchong Dong Village,which has a history of 330 years, is a key historical relic under the state's protection, while the hair-gear of the male Basha Miaos is unique.
- **Rongjiang County:** The Chejiang Dong Village is where the standard pronunciation of Dong language was developed. The 21-storey Drum Tower standing in the middle of the village has been inscribed by the *Guinness world Records*, and is the venue for the grand Sama Festival; the Miaos in 100-Birds clothes at (Moon Mountain) in Baibei Miao Village; Kongshen Mini-skirted Miao and their romantic Maoren Festival.
- **Liping Count:** Zhaoxing Dong Village, Tang'an Dong Village Ecology Museum, Diping Bridge, Former Site of the Liping Meeting of the Red Army in Defeng Town. Visitors can enjoy the music and the appealing fashions of the Dong people.

"Hundred-bird Clothes" Miao living in Moon Mountain, Rongjiang County

Recommended Itineraries

1. Tour around the State-level Wuyang River Scenic Area

A. Bus route: Guiyang—Chongan River in Huangping (Shili Ancient Gorge, Feiyunya, rafting on Yedong River, Gejia and Miao villages—Shibing (Mt. Yuntai, Shanmu River, Upper Wuyang Gorge)—Zhenyuan (Lower Wuyang Gorge, ancient buildings in Qinglong Cave)—Kaili—Guiyang/ Mt. Fanjing—western Hunan province

B. Railway route: Take K946 air-con tourist bus departing from Guiyang to Yuping—at Gulong Station in Huangping County, take a bus to Chong'an River for an hour—Shibing—Zhenyuan—Guiyang

This route is accessible with transportation. There are air-con buses departing from Guiyang, and hotels up to three stars. Price for standard rooms: 50~100 yuan/ person. Economical tourist resort: 40 yuan/ person.

2. Circular route around Kaili to appreciate the Miao cultures and customs

A. Bus route: Guiyang—Kaili (Nationality Museum, Qingman Miao Village, Tonggu Miao Village, Zhang'ao Miao Village, Qinghu Miao Village in West River, waterfalls of Xiangshuiyan in Leigongshan Nature Reserve—Taijiang (Shidong Miao Village, Fanpai Miao Village)—Jianghe (Raohao Miao Village, Jianhe Hot Spring)—Kaili—Guiyang/ Jianhe—Sansui—Tianzhu—Jinping—Liping

This route is also accessible in transportation. There is an expressway from between Guiyang and Kaili. Road are all in good condition. An air-con bus going from the county seat to Guiyang takes only 2.5 hours.

3. Circular route around Liping to appreciate Dong cultures

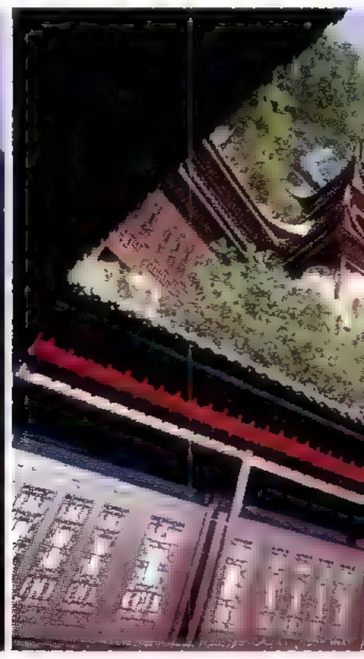
A. Bus route: Guiyang—Kaili—Leishan—Rongjiang (ancient cypresses along Duliu River, 21-storey Drum Tower in Chejiang Dong Village, Sama Temple, Kongshen Mini-skirted Miao Village in Liangwang Township, Baibei Miao Village at Mt. Moon Liping (Bazhou River, Tianshengqiao Bridge, Liping Meeting Site, Drum Tower in Yandong Dong Village)—Zhaoxing (drum tower groups, Tang'an Dong Village Ecosystem Museum)—Diping Bridge—Guiyang/ Sanjiang, Longsheng, or Guilin in Guangxi Province

B. Bus route: Guilin, Longsheng, Sanjiang-Diping Bridge—Zhaoxing—Liping—Rongjiang—Congjiang (Basha Miao Village, Gaozeng Dong Village, Zengchong Dong Village)

This route is comparatively arduous, in which 90% is sandy road. It is suitable to hire a jeep, or a mini-bus. It is not suggested to go deep in the villages in winter when ice is accumulated on the roads. Where you face landslides during rainy season, you may ask help from the hospitable locals.

The Shanglangde Miao Village in Leishan County

The West River Qianhu Miao Village in Leishan County



Travel Information of Southeast Guizhou

1. Kaili

Accommodation: Kaili Hotel **, 80~320 yuan/room; Yinpanpo Nationality Hotel **, 60~280 yuan/ room; Guotai Hotel **, 168~380 yuan/room; Hongyan Hotel **: 168 yuan~380 yuan/ room; Tenglong Hotel: 100~280 yuan/ room; Southeast Hotel: 80~180 yuan/ room; common guesthouses: 10~30 yuan/ night

Transportation:

1. Bus: Guiyang—Kaili (expressway). Every 30 minutes, 2.5 hours. Air-con bus: 35 yuan/ person; during Spring Festival: 45 yuan/ person
2. Railway: K946/ 945 Guiyang—Yuping, 07:00~10:50 (arrive Kaili); 17:10 (arrive Guiyang). 36 yuan/ person

Dining: Sour soup of the Miaos, preserved fish and meat of the Dongs, Sichuan and Guizhou flavour dishes, Canton restaurants in the city and local Guangdong feasts provided in Tenglong Hotel.

2. Leishan

Accommodation: Leishan Hotel: 80~180 yuan/ room; Jianxin Hotel: 60~120 yuan/ room; Xiangshuiyan Hotel (20 km from county seat in the Leigongshan Scenic Area): 180~680 yuan/ room

Transportation: Kaili—Leishan; service time: 06:00~18:00; fare: 4~6 yuan

Dining: Similar to those in Kaili.

3. Huangping

Accommodation: Chongan River Tourist Resort: 40 yuan/ bed; Jiangxin Tower **Guesthouse:** 5 yuan/ bed

Transportation: Guiyang—Huangping; air-con buses at 08:00, 12:00, 14:30; fare: 30 yuan/ person; duration: 3 hours

Dining: The resort provided Guizhou dishes such as fish cooked in sour soup, and feasts from Sichuan, Guangdong, and western styles.

4. Taijiang

Accommodation: Miaojiang Hotel: 80~160 yuan/ room; Yingbingguan Hotel: 80~160 yuan/ room; Dishui Hotel: 60~148 yuan/ room; Dianli Hotel: 60~120 yuan/ room; Gonglu Hotel: 80~120 yuan/ room

Transportation: Kaili—Taijiang; service time: 06:00~18:00 everyday; fare: 6 yuan

Dining: similar to those in Kaili

Antique buildings in Qinglong Cave, Zhenyuan County

Wind and Rain Tower located in Diping Dong Village, Liping County

5. Jianhe

Accommodation: Wenquan (Hot Spring) Hotel: 120~160 yuan/ room; Huaqing Hotel: 80~120 yuan/ room. Both hotels provide 24-hour hot spring water shower and bathing pools of different sizes

Transportation: Kaili—Jianhe; service time: 07:00~17:00. Fare: 8 yuan

Dining: Similar to those in Kaili. But the locals are also fond of eating insects like aspongopus and locust.

6. Liping

Accommodation: Liping Hotel, Linye Hotel: 60~120 yuan/ room

Transportation: Guiyang—Liping (bus terminus at sports centre), one sleepers bus everyday at 10:00. Fare: 55 yuan

Dining: Preserved fish and meat of the Dongs, and peach pear.

7. Rongjiang

Accommodation: Rongjiang Hotel, Qingfeng Hotel, Wurong Hotel, Lantian (Blue sky) Hotel: 60~168 yuan/ room

Transportation: Guiyang—Rongjiang (bus terminus at sports centre), one sleepers bus everyday at 09:00. Fare: 40 yuan; Kaili—Rongjiang (Kaiyunsi Bus Terminus): four services a day. Fare (sleepers): 30 yuan; (standard bus): 15~20 yuan. Service time: 08: 00, 11:00, 14:00, 16:00

Dining: Porchetta and Rongjiang water melon.

8. Congjiang

Accommodation: Gongdian Hotel, Yueliangshan Hotel, Tenglongge Hotel, Yanye Hotel: 60~168 yuan/ room

Transportation: Guiyang—Congjiang (bus terminus at sports centre), one sleepers bus everyday at 09:00. Fare: 50 yuan; Kaili—Congjiang (Kaiyunsi Bus Terminus), two sleepers buses everyday at 08:00/ 13:00. Fare: 40 yuan.

Dining: Preserved pig, glutinous rice, tangerine.

Other Tips

Visitors to Guizhou must bring adequate raining gears including a pair of slip-resistant climbing shoes. Also, do bring medicines with you to prevent insects, mosquitoes, and gastric diseases. It is suggested to eat more chafing dishes since they are relatively clean. Those who are not used to the sour and spicy food of the Miaos and Dongs should bring other foods themselves. Remember to book the lodging place in advance of the tour, since everywhere will be fully booked (including local residences) during grand festivals. For tourists who plan to visit remote villages of the Miaos and Dongs, it is better to bring sleeping bags.

If you are not a good drinker, do not accept the wine filled in ox-horn shape bottle given by the Miao people. Also, do not take the active role to clink glass with them, or you may have to drink up the wine.

Many highway facilities are under improvement nowadays in Qiandongnan Prefecture. In a foreseen future, the area will become a hot line tourist route.

"Bogda" means "divine mountain" in Mongolian. This mountain has three adjoining peaks, with the major one 5,445 metres high, the loftiest in the eastern part of the Tianshan Mountains. The people of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities used to pay special homage to Bogda as an act of simple faith. Every time they moved around the Tianshan Mountains in search of pastures, they would get off their horses and kowtow to the distant Bogda, praying for peace and prosperity.

In Touch with the Real Bogda

Photos by Jian Jun Article by Li Lu

A Peak that I Saw Every Day

When I was a child, I could always see the magnificent Bogda through classroom windows; it accompanied me every day I went to school. In my mind's eye, the sky was always so blue then. Though far away, the snow-covered mountain under the azure sky seemed almost within touching distance; at sunset the evening light glowed on the mountainsides, reddening the snow-covered peaks, like an exquisite painting. In recent times the city has filled with smoke, dust and noise, and Bogda is always obscured except when the air has been cleaned by rain or snow.

We set off early on a sunny morning, guided by Zhen Xilin, well known in mountaineering circles. Sixty years old and holder of the highest mountaineering record, Mr. Zhen is one of the most experienced explorers of Xinjiang. He has conquered numerous mountains and explored all the most dangerous places in this region, such as the ancient cities of Loulan and Niya, and the Taklimakan Desert. Also in our party were Jian Jun, Old Fan, Ma Jing, Yu'er, Maria and some others. Having checked all our equipment, we drove

off out of the familiar city at exactly 11 a.m. The sky was blue at that time, and everyone looked excited. Mr. Zhen, however, kept reminding us of mountaineering precautions. We nodded repeatedly, but our hearts had already sped to Bogda.

Approaching the Bodga Peak

Possibly fate was testing us. Only 70 km after leaving, we suddenly suffered a mishap on the highway — a flat tyre. Hurriedly taking out tools, the lads rushed to repair it, but annoyingly, the spare wheel was flat too. We had no alternative but to urgently summon another vehicle. After a delay of an hour or so, we finally reached the Heavenly Pool, carrying our equipment and the flat spare wheel, having left Ma Jing behind at the breakdown spot. In a restaurant we had our last proper meal before climbing the mountain. After lunch, we packed up our equipment, and carrying our packs set off on foot. Just then it unexpectedly began to drizzle, like a cleansing shower for us dusty city types.

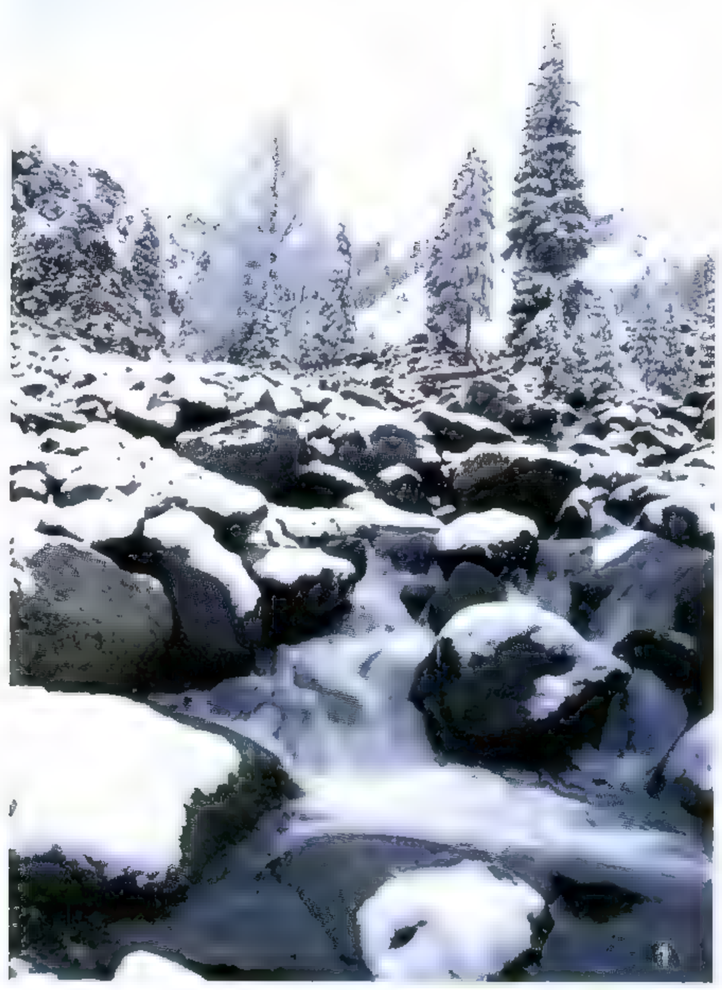
Having been delayed so long, we failed to make our intended Camp One site in time, so had no choice but to pitch our tents on a piece of level sheltered grassland. The drizzle may have seemed mildly romantic shortly before, but was the snow that followed a warning to us?

By the time we finished a hasty supper, the snow was falling heavily and a strong wind was blowing. It was my first night outdoors and lying in the tent, I simply couldn't sleep. Tossing and turning in bed, muddleheaded and without any sense of time, I noticed Mr. Zhen, who was staying in another tent, get up to check the pegs and shake off the snow piled on the tents. Listening to these sounds, I finally fell asleep.

1. A group picture before the climbers set off
2. Bogda Peak, 3,816 metres above sea level
3. It began to drizzle soon after we started climbing. Unwilling to wait, we had to walk in the rain

Sunshine After Fall of Snow

Nearly 40 cm of snow fell that night, almost covering our tents. Even worse, the cold wind kept blowing and I had got hardly any sleep. I guessed other people were in the same situation. At 08:30 the next morning, we started breakfast. It was Ma Jing's birthday, so the talk mostly involved what a sleepyhead she was, but everyone felt it a shame not being able to congratulate her to her face.



The snow showed no signs of abating after breakfast, so we all had to stay inside the tents chatting. Unfortunately, we could not take any pictures during these two days because of the bad weather. At noon, Jianjun began to chat with the girls. Because of lack of sleep the previous night, Mr. Zhen and I retired to our sleeping bags. Even after a sound nap, the weather was still bad and the cloud thick. Then I began to chat with Mr. Zhen, heating a kettle of milk tea. Jianjun was talking with Old Fan, while Yu'er fooled around making a large snowman. Mr. Zhen and I watched her playing. At supper, we were all very cheerful because the sunset augured good weather for the next day, and the horses we hired would climb up the mountain to meet us early the next morning.

It was deep in night, there was no cloud in the sky, and the stars all over the sky were clear. I tried to recogise the Andromeda and Great Bear, thinking of what would be the next day's travel like.

Making a Difficult Decision

We set off after a simple breakfast. Jian Jun and Old Fan walked in front, Maria in the middle, and Yu'er and I brought up the rear. The weather was fine, so we made our way very quickly, arriving in no time at Camp One where we should have camped, a place called by the locals Big Rocks. I glanced at my altitude meter, it read 2,200 metres.

The depth of snow grew to about a metre. If we forced the horses on through this, they could break a leg. Faced with this dilemma , Mr. Zhen made a decision which bitterly annoyed him: he and one of the grooms would stay there and camp with most of our gear, and the rest of us would go on carrying our own equipment and food. I realised it was a very difficult decision for Mr. Zhen.

By the time we overcame this hurdle, it was already dusk. Bogda was suffused with mauve-pink evening light. Perhaps it was the best reward for all our hard work, I thought. We were all moved and full of admiration for such splendour. Despite exhaustion and altitude sickness, Jian Jun and I hurriedly took out our cameras and took pictures from different angles.

It was already very late. We found some sheltered flat land to pitch our tents. We scrambled inside, took off our frozen boots and trousers, quickly crawled into warm sleeping bags, and prepared a simple supper in the tents. Because of the altitude, we all suffered from mountain sickness to varying degrees. Old Fan was in a particularly bad way, with symptoms of vomiting, headache and even mild hallucinations. He kept muttering: "We are human, not gods. Who can stand this?" The rest of us had headaches and slight fever but after drinking some hot water, people became to feel better.

It was quiet that night, and we could hear each other's

breathing. Gradually we relaxed. Listening to the sound of a gentle wind blowing outside the tent, we fell into a deep sleep.

In Touch with the Real Bodga

We were becoming acclimatised because we had walked for the first two days. On the third day, we soon left the campsite where we had spent the night far below, and the peaks of Bogda ahead of us grew nearer and nearer. At noon, we finally reached the Bogda base camp at an altitude 3,710 metres. Mt. Bogda was bathed in sunshine at that point; it seemed within our grasp, as though we could reach the summit in few more steps. Our breathing became heavier and heavier, and our hearts beat faster and faster, as if we could already feel Bogda's strong pulse. The mountain revealed its ridges, showing off its majesty and wildness. Such is the spirit of great mountains — just like the clear faces of our men in western China. We couldn't help closing our eyes, disbelieving what we saw. But when we opened our eyes, yes, it was still there! Truly we had felt the real Bogda.

At the foot of Bogda stood several memorial stones, one commemorating a female member of the Japanese Kyoto Mountaineering Team who fell into a crevasse aged 23 in 1981. Mr. Zhen himself set up the memorial stone for her. The other three steles were erected in 1999 by a group of mountaineers from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the memory of Lin Zhiwei, Chen Jingquan and Yang Zhihao. Standing before the stones, we remained silent for a long time, praying in our hearts they were at eternal peace.

It was late. A swathe of cloud rose from the top of Bogda, forewarning of an impending snowstorm. Though reluctant to leave we immediately started to descend, waving good-bye to Bogda.

Pines began to appear, thick green were everywhere around, seeming to welcome our return. We stepped on the pine needles, smelling slight rosin, and listening to the billows of pines. Bogda was saying good-bye to us, most gently and passionately.

We walked swiftly, arriving at Camp One in only one day. By then all of us had recovered physically. When we looked back at the path we had climbed, it was hidden by the stacked peaks and green ranges. Bogda, however, was still silent, standing there in the cloud and mist. What had I taken from Bogda, or what had I given it, I asked myself. Bogda was just like an aged wise man, sitting there still and staring at us who were suffocated with desires and secular matters, as if he had never been disturbed. Thanks to nature's grandeur and man's ambition to conquer nature, we can see alternative ways of living.

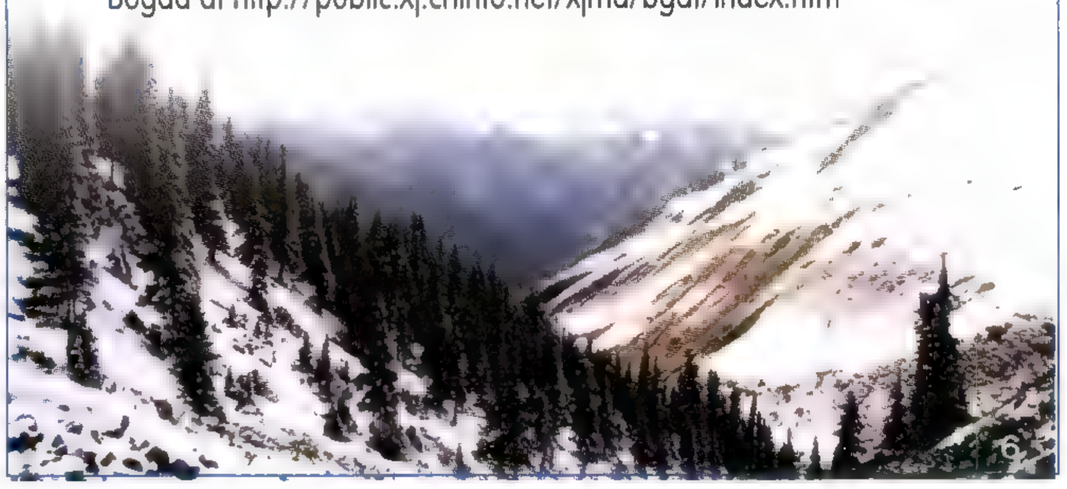
Translated by Huang Deyuan

1. Melted snow from Bogda flows all the way into the Heavenly Pool
2. At the foot of Bogda lies the Heavenly Pool, a famous scenic spot in Urümqi
3. A wind-resistant tent is necessary for outdoor camping
4. The girls played games in front of the tents
5. A moment's silence in front of the memorial to dead climbers
6. A vast stand of pine on the mountain

❄ Brief Introduction to Bogda Peak ❄

- ❄ **Altitude :** 5,445 metres
- ❄ **Location :** In the eastern part of the Tianshan Mountains, at latitude east 88.3° and longitude north 43.8° in Fukang County, Xinjiang.
- ❄ **Structure :** Composed of three closely adjoining peaks, it has bare lower reaches and steep rocks at the summit.
- ❄ **Climate on the mountain :** Mainly influenced by the upper air in northwestern China. Very hot at the foot of the mountain, but wet and cold in the central and high altitude areas. Temperatures average -16℃ ~ -19℃ in January, and 10℃ ~12℃ in July. The rainfall is less than 200 mm a year, mainly in July and August in summer when two-thirds of the whole year's amount occurs, with more on the north side than the south. There is little strong wind in the peak area, with annual wind speeds averaging 2.7~2.9 metres per second. During the day, wind speed and cloud cover usually increase in the afternoon, and the weather worsens.
- ❄ **Snow period :** From the second half of September to the end of the following May. During this time, the snow is as deep as 65 cm, unsuitable for mountaineering.
- ❄ **Best Mountaineering Period :** June, July and August

For more information about Bogda, consult the webpage on Challenging Bogda at http://public.xj.cninfo.net/xjma/bgdf/index.htm



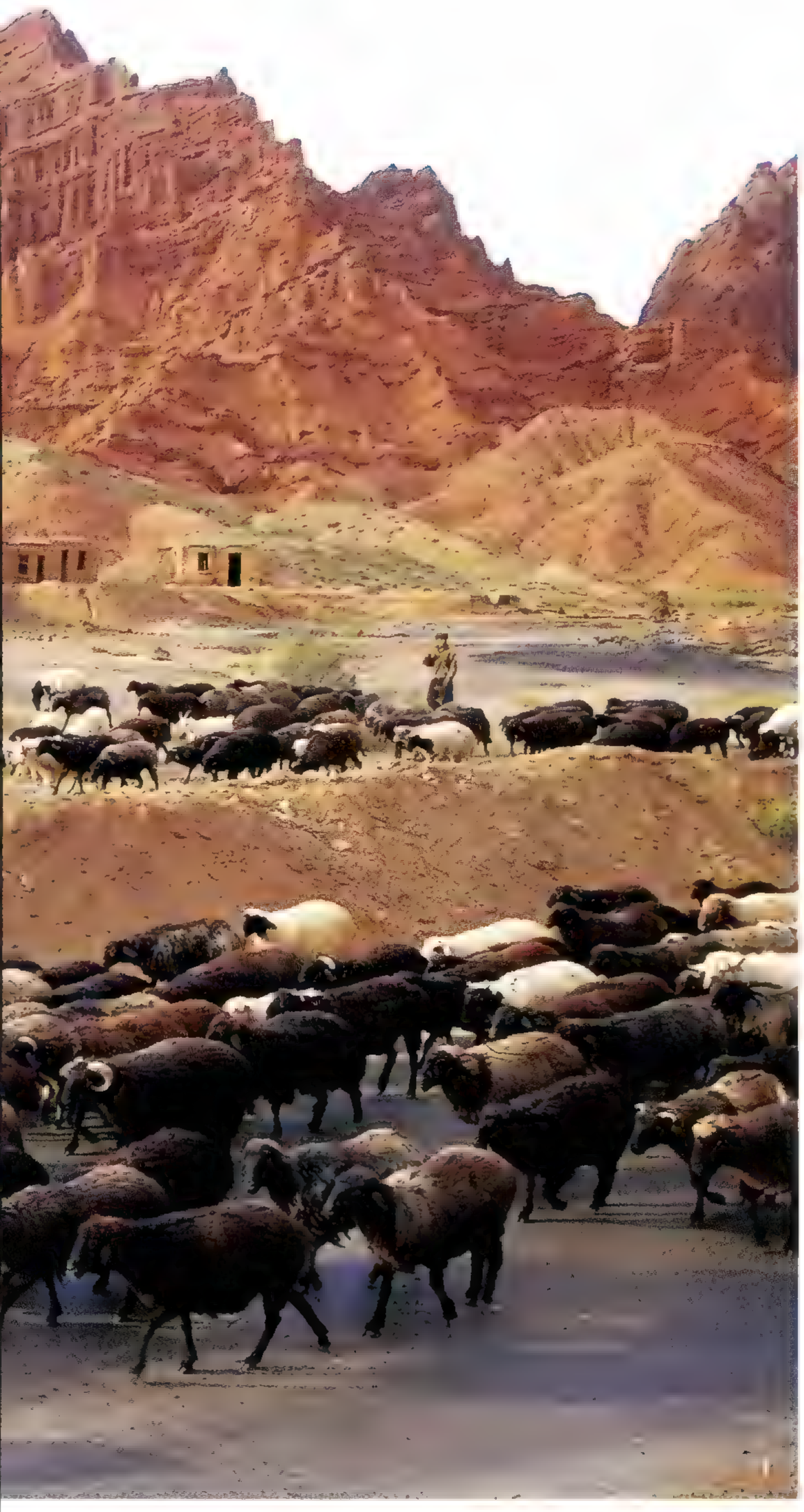
THREE TIMES TO THE KUCHE GRAND CANYON

Photos & article by Han Xuezhang, Zhang Yan

During a photography expedition this writer went on, we by chance found a large canyon situated about 60 km to the north of Kuche. It is 50 km long and its geographical characteristics are of the "Yardang" topography. Although this sort of topography is not rare within a 3,000 sq km radius of Lop Nur, the other examples are all of the dunes type. The Yardang topography was formed with the Kuche River running through the canyon among deep valleys and steep mountains, making it visually particularly magnificent and spectacular.

Entering one of the 36 ancient nations in China's Western Region

In June 1996, we were in a group with some members of the China Water Resources Photography Association and went on a photo shoot to what's been called China's "Home of Swans"—Xinjiang's Bayanbulak Prefecture. We left the beautiful city of Urümqi by jeep and travelled south along national highway No. 314, our destination Kuche. The picturesque scenery along the way that could inspire any number of poems or paintings sent our tiredness



packing; pretty villages, ancient castles, clear blue skies, scattered sheep, and the different peoples including Han and Uygur all conspired to bring harmony and joy to the wide open land. Around dusk, we finally completed our 700 km journey and arrived at the important western town in Kuche County.

Kuche, located within Xinjiang's Aksu Prefecture, was called Guici in former times. It was one of the 36 ancient nations of China's Western Region, and a major junction on the northern section of the historical Silk Road. It had also been a centre for commerce, politics and culture in the northwestern border region since the Han and Tang Dynasties. The city was named "Yiluolu" in the Tang Dynasty (618—907). When the famous monk Tang Xuanzang (or Tripitak) journeyed toward the west for a Buddhist sutra, he passed here. The ancient Guici nation controlled four towns, 16 agencies and 72 states; its population was over 80,000, making it one of the most populous and strong nations in the Western Region at the time. Modern-day Kuche County lies at the centre of its territory, which includes the counties of Baicheng, Luntan, Xinhe, Shaya, Aksu and Wushi. Kuche is home to the world-renowned Guici music and dance. History records show the Guici nation was famous for its strings and wind instrument music.

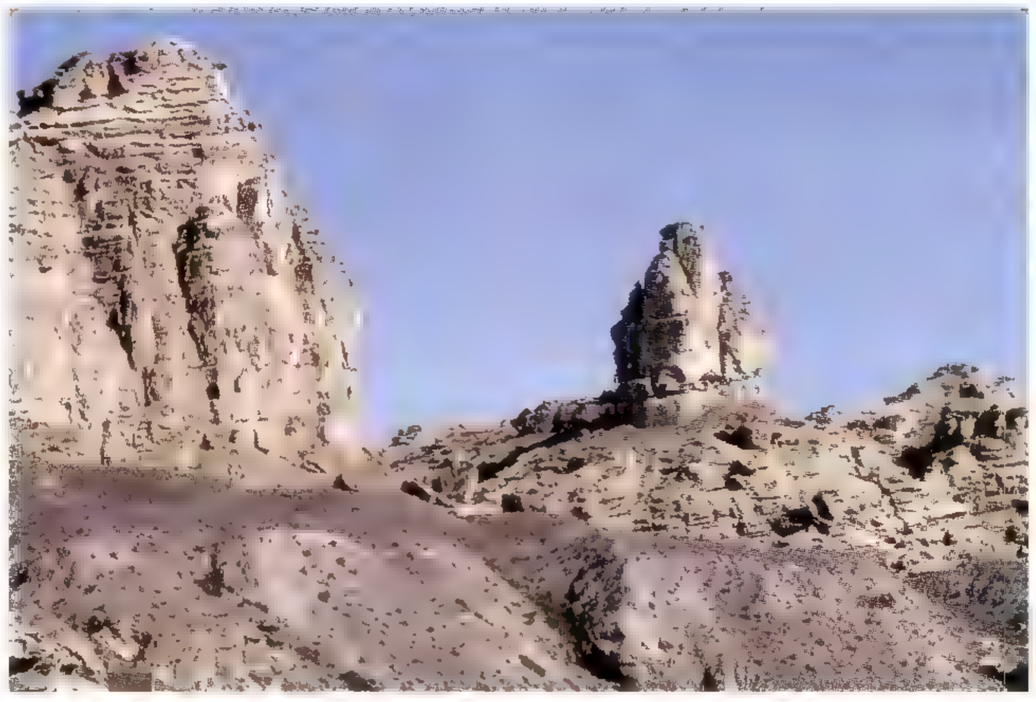
A glance of a mysterious 50-km-long canyon

The Bayanbulak Swan Reserve is found at the southern end of the Tianshan, or Heavenly Mountains, and if you enter Bayanbulak from the south, the Kuche Grand Canyon is on the way. On the second day, we headed to the swan reserve from Kuche.

We drove north on a smooth road. But after about an hour, the vehicle's vibrations intensified as the road surface deteriorated. The driver told us we were already in the valley. Here in the depths of the mountains some 60 km to the north of the ancient Guici nation, we saw the mysterious 50-km-long canyon that few people in the world had been privileged to see.

The canyon ran in a north-south direction, its valleys winding and snaking. On both sides one can see steep cliffs and rock faces and twisting mountain paths, while the sparkling Kuche River rushes through the valleys. When all is calm and quiet, the river water crashes against the mountain rocks with sharp cracks as if a natural symphony was echoing down the valley. The huge rocks on the mountain sides have endured billions of years of wind and water erosion, as well as withstanding the scorching sun. The result is the most awe-inspiring and incredible work of art. The brilliant colours especially, combined with the splendour of the mountain peaks were enough to render us speechless!

1. The Kuche Grand Canyon, also called the Tianshan Grand Canyon, is located deep within the Tianshan Mountain Range more than 60 km north of Kuche
2. There are fewer than 50 named sights at the Grand Canyon, and many others are still waiting to be named — and doesn't this look like the birthday peach being offered to the fairy empress?



As urban dwellers used to noise and pollution, we were entranced by the natural scene before us. Pure and unspoiled, startlingly quiet and spectacularly beautiful, the strange and wonderful rocks with colours and shapes only seen in dreams took us totally by surprise! Red like fire, yellow like gold, black like carbon, green like jade, the multi-coloured mountains were as if a passionate painter had splashed around vivid hues of every shade of the rainbow. Such beauty was breathtaking to behold.

"Yardang" means "treacherous hills with steep cliffs"

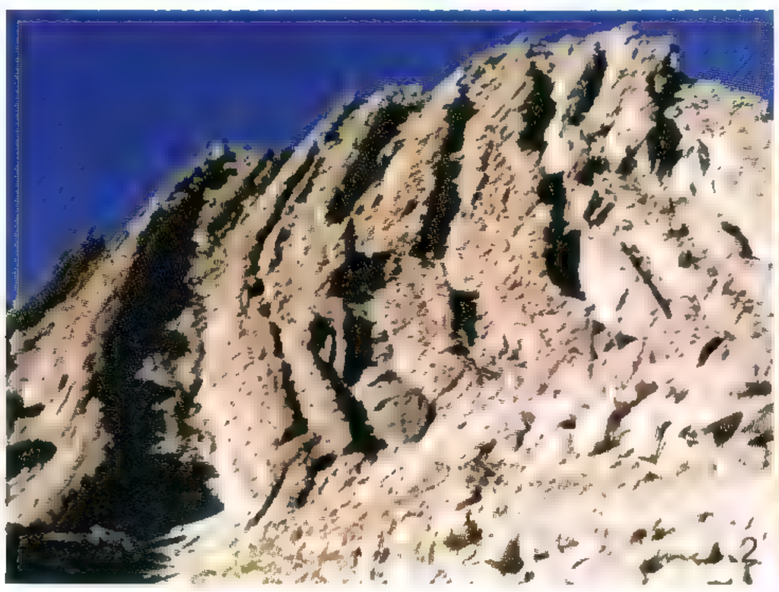
The Kuche Grand Canyon as part of the Tianshan Mountain Ranges, is also referred to as the Tianshan Grand Canyon. But due to the rocks' strange and brilliant colours that seem like god's masterstroke, it is also called "Tianshan Mystery Grand Canyon". Scientists classify the canyon as Yardang topography. Yardang, or "Ya'erdan", is the title the Uygur people give to "treacherous hills with steep cliffs". This type of topography is the most typical and most widely distributed around Xinjiang's Lop Nur. According to historical data, from the late 19th to early 20th centuries, when the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin and English explorer Aurel M. Stein visited the Lop Nur region on their expeditions, the word "Yardang" was used in their reports. So Yardang became an internationally recognised term in geographical and archaeological circles, used to describe a special kind of topography in arid areas.

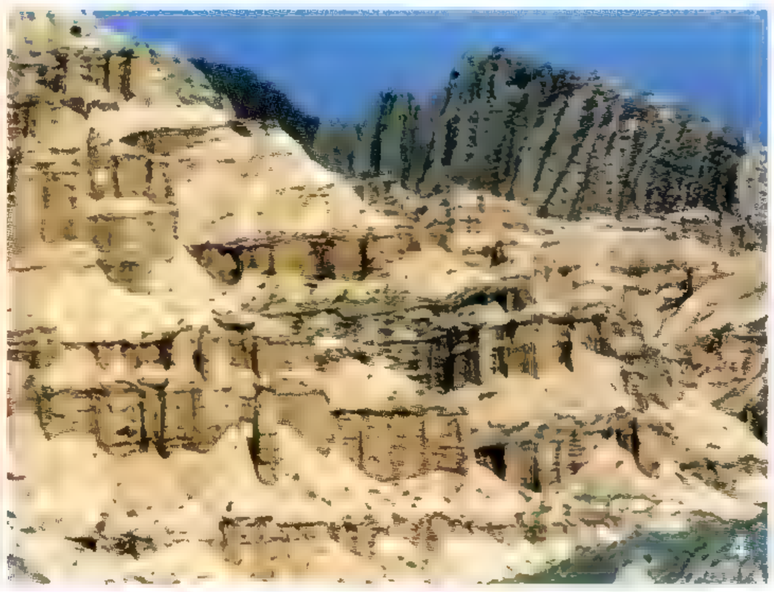
Yardang topography usually occurs in the lake-turned-plains of dry regions. As billions of years passed and the lake waters dried up, the soil became parched and cracked; the prevailing wind eroded and enlarged the cracks and the originally flat surface formed a series of irregular ditches and ridges. The Kuche Grand Canyon has this sort of unique Yardang topography. Flanking its long and narrow valleys, the mountains rise and fall in a constantly stimulating variety of shapes and sizes. The canyon winds and snakes for more than 50 km altogether. Every peak and mountain facet appears unusual and beautiful from different angles and perspectives. In changing light, the mountains seem both strange and striking, their appeal almost magical and offering endless scope for the imagination.

The mystery of Kuche Grand Canyon lies not only in its geography. Its colours also set it apart from other canyons. The sides of the canyon are mostly made up of red-brown rocks, but there are also other coloured rocks featuring emerald green, orange, navy blue and earthy grey. The entire canyon resembles a vibrantly coloured painting. But as our destination was the Bayanbulak Swan Reserve, we could not stay in the canyon for long, and with deep regret we left this entrancing place behind.

Two more visits to take more good pictures

From then on, we were totally captivated by the Grand Canyon. To see what other mysteries it holds and to capture its magnificence on film, in 1998 and 2000 we made two return trips to Kuche.





Now that the Grand Canyon is gaining popularity with tourists, tourism companies have developed the area but at the same time are conserving and protecting it. At present, there are dozens of named sights there. These sights are all in their natural state and have not been touched by humans in any way; what visitors enjoy are masterpieces entirely crafted by Mother Nature.

Translated by Cheng Lei

1. **Yardang topography usually features earthy mounds, but due to the canyon's location with the Kuche River running through it, its valleys are deep and the mountains are steep**
2. **Huge rocky mountains soar above the canyon. For billlions of years they have withstood strong wind and water corrosion as well as the scorching sun**
3. **Most of the canyon comprises red-brown rock, with splashes of such other colours as emerald green, orange, dark blue and grey**
4. **The canyon can be described as Yardang topography, which in Uygur means "treacherous hills with steep cliffs"**
5. **The Kuche River has carved out strange and wonderful mountain sculptures**

Travel Tips

➤ **Climate** Geographically, Kuche County is high in the north and low in the south, and slopes to the southeast. In the north are the Tianshan Mountains, their highest point Muztag Peak, at 4,553 metres above sea-level. Kuche County enjoys a warm, dry, continental climate; its average temperature for the year is 11.4°C, while frost-free days average around 207 per year.

➤ **Transport** From the city of Urümqi two trains depart daily and pass Kuche. The first is the K886 air-conditioned train, from Urümqi to Kashi, departing Urümqi every day at 15:14 and arriving in Kuche at 5:12 the next morning. The fare is 215 yuan. The second service is the 5806 train, from Urümqi to Aksu, departing at 22:15 daily and arriving in Kuche at 14:24 on the next day, for 178 yuan. It's even more convenient if you prefer bus travel. The 314 and 217 national highways both pass Kuche. There are hourly coach services from Urümqi to Kuche; the coaches are air-conditioned luxury buses with sleepers and toilets. The fare is 160 yuan per person; air-conditioned buses without toilets and sleepers cost 120 yuan, while normal coaches are 100 yuan. It is less than 70 km or an hour's travel from Kuche to the canyon, there are six tourist buses going there. A ticket costs only 30 yuan. Or you could quite easily take a taxi or charter a vehicle to the canyon.

➤ **Accommodation** A standard twin room at the Guici Hotel with 24-hour hot water costs 150 yuan per person per day. The Kuche Hotel has the same facilities as the Guici Hotel, and charges 140 yuan per person per day. There is a cheaper alternative, the Jiaotong Hotel, which costs only 100 yuan per person per day.

It is also easy to stay at the canyon itself. A hotel catering for up to 150 guests is already in operation. Although it is in a remote place, you can make long distance telephone calls, and the Muslim restaurant within the hotel is bound to give you a special taste of the western regions.

➤ **Dining** The local specialties are tasty and exotic. The dry and crisp "nang" (Xinjiang's baked cake), delicious large-plate chicken, tender lamb and scrumptious wide noodles will all make you forget any diet plans and happily indulge. Especially worth a mention are the Kuche lamb shasliks, surely the best in Xinjiang. Not only are they large (each shaslik is more than a foot long), but they are cooked in a peach wood-fired oven. The shasliks are nicely interspersed with fat and lean pieces of tender lamb, so morsels are never greasy or chewy, and each one costs five yuan. For those of you without a large appetite, one is enough.

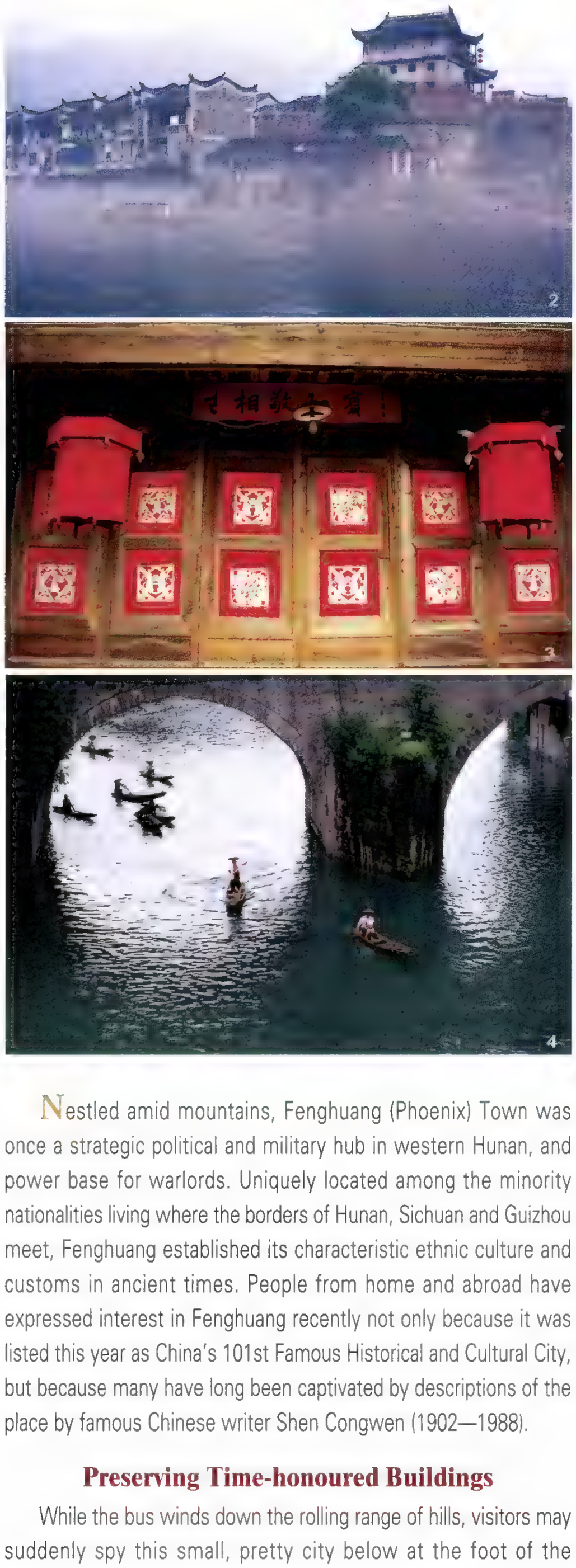
➤ **Travel Agency** Kuche International Travel Agency Tel: (997) 7136016/ 7122524, Fax: (997) 7132685

➤ **Other Sights** Kuche County is rich in tourism resources. Apart from the canyon, there are more than 50 cultural relic sites, among them a major national heritage conservation site, the Kumtura Thousand-Buddha Caves. Other interesting sites include the Guici Ancient City, large and small dragon pools, the Maerzhabahe Thousand-Buddha Caves, the ancient city of Subashi, the tombs of Molana Eshiding, and Kezil Thousand-Buddha Caves.

A Diamond Inlaid in a Green Land

Fenghuang Today

Photos by Helen Lee, Hei Man
Article by Helen Lee



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mist Bijia Mountain and Ximenpo (West Gate Hill) occasionally appear. A turbulent history and human thoughtlessness have conspired to destroy many tourist attractions and ancient buildings. However, due to the tireless efforts of some enlightened locals in the past, the local government and experts have set up a long-term urban plan focusing on maintaining and refurbishing Fenghuang's historic buildings.

The city boasts a total of 68 ancient buildings, 116 ruins, 120-plus Ming and Qing residences, more than 20 slab-stone streets, and over 30 temples and ancestral halls. A protected area has been defined starting from the County Committee building, passing Nanmenlang (South Gate Veranda), a local market, Nanbian Street, Dongmen (East Gate), Beibian Street, Beimen (North Gate), to Wenxing Street and its nearby square. The area from Huilong (Returning Dragon) Court to the riverside in Shuimenkou (Water Gate Mouth) is listed as a protected zone. All historic buildings within the protected areas may not be demolished. Step by step, buildings are being restored to their original look. In 2001, the jumbled spider's web of exposed power poles and lines were relocated underground. The unique slab-stone streets have been re-paved, refreshing Fenghuang's image.

Renovation of Fengyu Tower on Rainbow Bridge

Another important project was to refurbish Fengyu (Wind and Rain) Tower built on Hongqiao (Rainbow Bridge). The three-arch bridge supported by two piers, was built from red rectangular stones and cemented with a mixture of glutinous rice and crushed limestone in the seventh year of Ming Emperor Hongwu's reign (1374). In 1914, Tian Yingzhao, an official stationed in western Hunan, first raised capital to construct a wooden tower on the bridge. The roofed tower contained 12 stores on both sides and a 3.6-metre-wide corridor in the middle. The tower was an attraction in the heyday of the bustling county seat but was dismantled in 1956 to provide space for the Jifeng Highway. It was rebuilt in 1999 after new highways and bridges had greatly eased traffic flow in Fenghuang County. An upper floor was added to showcase cultural artifacts of minority nationalities, and visitors can enjoy the scenery while sipping tea in a teahouse. The Old Bridge in Venice is a similar surviving structure. The lights from Rainbow Bridge reflecting in the river have become one of Fenghuang's eight most famous views.

The Old City District is the hub of the ancient buildings and Fenghuang's busiest area, extending from Rainbow Bridge in the east, to Yannaopo in the south, Chitangping in the west, and Tuojiang River in the north. A fortified city—Yuecheng (Moon City)—

Nestled amid mountains, Fenghuang (Phoenix) Town was once a strategic political and military hub in western Hunan, and power base for warlords. Uniquely located among the minority nationalities living where the borders of Hunan, Sichuan and Guizhou meet, Fenghuang established its characteristic ethnic culture and customs in ancient times. People from home and abroad have expressed interest in Fenghuang recently not only because it was listed this year as China's 101st Famous Historical and Cultural City, but because many have long been captivated by descriptions of the place by famous Chinese writer Shen Congwen (1902—1988).

Preserving Time-honoured Buildings

While the bus winds down the rolling range of hills, visitors may suddenly spy this small, pretty city below at the foot of the mountains, embraced by a river as green as a jade band. Through the

1. Minjiang River in morning mist
2. Enchanting ancient buildings in Huangcheng
3. Inside an old residence (by Hei Man)
4. The Rainbow Bridge built in the Ming Dynasty
5. A pair of traditional Hunan straw shoes

A Diamond Inlaid in a Green Land

Fenghuang Today

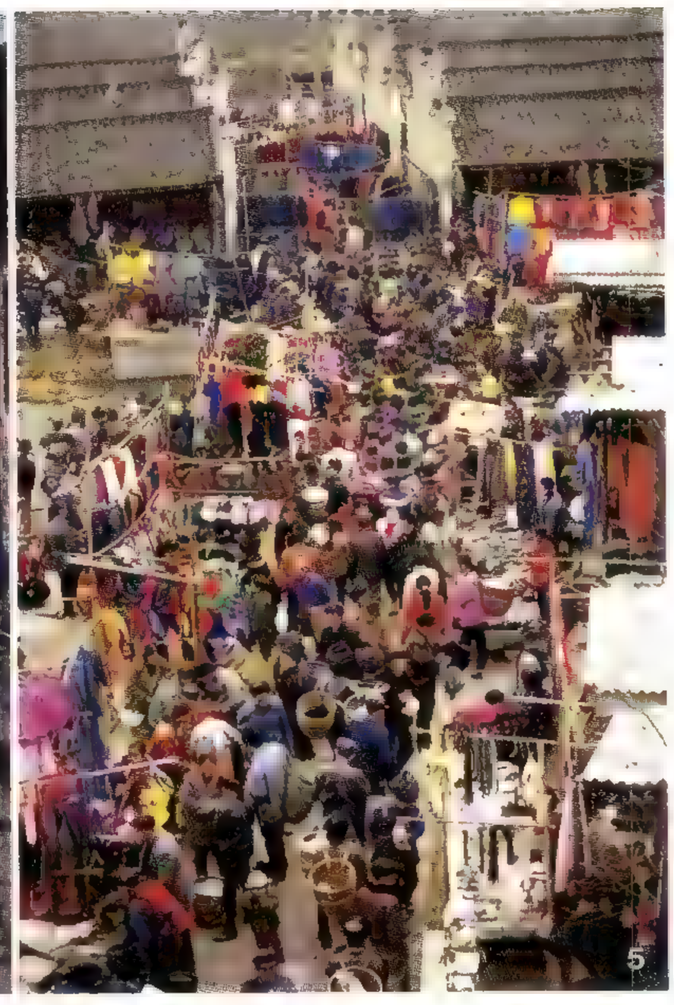
constructed between the Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368) and the 54th year of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign (1715) stands guard over the district. Modeled on Beijing's Front Gate, the city wall has four gates, is two kilometres long, 5.7 metres high and 3.7 metres wide. Each door of the entrance gate is lined with iron plates fixed with large flat-head nails. The city wall is precision built from red stone blocks. Looking in from the wall one sees the old town district with its black roofs and white walls; the view looking out is of the picturesque riverbank.

Crossing "Jumping Rocks" a Must

Stepping out from Moon City via the striking North Gate one can easily reach the "Jumping Rocks". Built in the 43rd year of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign (1704), the rocks were an important route linking Fenghuang with northeastern China at that time. But they were swept away by floodwaters in the late Qing Dynasty (1644—1911). A stone bridge, 100 metres long and consisting of 15 mounds linked by iron chains regularly placed across the river, was then built at a site 20 metres upstream. In 1999, the county government restored the old "Jumping Rocks" at the original site. Crossing the "Jumping Rocks" has become a must for tourists. Still, one has to be careful when walking over them. Returning to the city by the North Gate, one can find the residence of Xiong Xiling in a small lane off Wenxing Street. Born in Fenghuang, Xiong was the Premier of Beiyang (the Qing Dynasty's name for the coastal provinces of Liaoning, Hebei and Shandong) Government in 1913. His enthusiasm in promoting education, industry and commerce earned him the name "Xiong Fenghuang". His residence is a one-storey house comprising a

central room, bedroom and side room. Featuring the typical architecture of the Miao people, the central room leads to a small courtyard encircled by a few chambers.

Plenty of temples, ancestral halls, guildhalls, and especially opera stages for entertaining the locals can be found in Fenghuang's Old City District. The Chaoyang Palace (previously called the Chan Family Ancestral Hall) near Xiong's former house, is the best preserved, and is where domestic Fenghuang operas are always staged. Entering a maroon gate decorated with clay sculptures, one finds an opera stage. In front of the stage is a 270-square-metre slab-stone courtyard. Two-storeyed chambers with three rooms and wooden gates for VIP guests are built on both sides of the stage. Verses in front of the stage declare: "A few feet can reveal the family, the state, or the world" and "A long-lived figure can be a wise man, a stupid man, or a god". A horizontal scroll bids us to observe today through the lessons of history.



Former Home of a Great Literati

After leaving the ancestral hall one soon arrives at the former home of writer Shen Congwen in Zhongying Street. The house was built in the fifth year of Qing Emperor Tongzhi's reign (1866), by Shen's grandfather Shen Hongfu, then chief commander of Zhaotong Town in Yunnan. The great writer was born and raised in this house. The mansion is an exquisite quadrangle with two entrances. Seasonal flowers and a huge fishpond decorate the courtyard. Shen's working desk is displayed in the house. Literature lovers can stroll along Tuojiang Old Street and visit Shen Congwen's tomb. The path in the tomb is a relic of the Ming-Qing period. The gravestone is a huge natural rock inscribed with Shen's words: "Following my thoughts, you can understand 'me'; following my thoughts, you can understand 'man'." The words are every bit as simple and powerful as the writer.

Tuojian Old Street is an unforgettable place. Whenever you visit the street, whether in the morning mist, at evening when the lights are lit or on rainy days, it is always worthwhile. Built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368), the street lies in the middle of Fenghuang city. Ethnic handicraft stores as well as artists' workshops occupy both sides of the street. Among them are those belonging to Liu

1. Fenghuang's traditional culture and ethnic customs are well worth attention (by Hei Man)
2. A fisherman and his cormorants
3. A Miao woman crosses the "Jumping Rocks"
4. In 2001, Fenghuang's slab-stone streets were given a face-lift (by Hei Man)
5. The Miao villages and their markets around Fenghuang are also attractions (by Hei Man)

Dapao and Xiaog Chengzao, well known Miao dyeing master and new wax printing artist respectively. Some stores are 100 years old, their owners polite and well educated. There are also stands selling rice, bean curd and noodles. Diners enjoy the food while sitting on short wooden chairs—Fenghuang's specialty—around the tables. On wet days, the raindrops fall from the black tiles to the shiny slab-stone road with an appealing patter.

Five Major Scenic Areas Along the River

Walking from Fengyu Tower, you can visit the Shawan Scenic Area and enjoy five of its eight famous former attractions: "Sunrise on the East Mountain Ridge", "Lights of Fishing Boats in Dragon Pool", "Returning Waves in Buddhist Court", "Moonlight in Xiqiao", and "Beautiful Strange Peaks". Near the hills is a lake with temples, pavilions and towers scattered around. Every Dragon Boat Festival (fifth day of the fifth lunar month) features Dragon Boat races. Dozens of teams of youngsters from the county seat and surrounding townships take part in the event, and every household in Fenghuang supports the action. During the races spectators crowd the riverbanks, their cheering combined with drum beats and sirens rising high in the sky.

On Liuyin Road a two-storeyed tower-called "Shanshui Jiangtang" (Mountain and Water Lecture Hall) and "Yangluge" (Greenish Court)—faces Wanmin Pagoda on the left and Fengyu Bridge on the right. Every morning, drama lovers enthusiastically practise singing here. A few steps from the river stands the Xiachang Court of the Wanshou Palace built in 1854, the fourth year of Xianfeng's reign. The tower's horizontal wooden roof beams create the shape of a triangular pagoda. Hooked eaves on every layer form a curved steep roof. The pillars and beams inside make a hexagonal verandah. Horizontal scrolls hanging in the tower are all precious writings of scholars. A series of 12 verses written in large Chinese characters is in the style of "Running Hand".

The Zhunti Nunnery is south of the Huilong Court. Built in 1715, the 54th year of Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign, it boasts two circular wooden carved windows said to be the eyes of the Bodhisattva. In the back room of the nunnery, which draws many visitors each day to burn incense, is a bronze statue of Thousand-hand Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) and a series of 20 Buddhist-based frescoes, masterpieces of noted painter Huang Yongyu. Mt. Tianma is a backdrop clad in firs, bamboo and light mist, while birdsong can be heard. If time allows, visit the Tianwang (Heavenly King) Temple, which can be reached by climbing about 100 stone steps from the eastern entrance. Its main hall is supported by 24 vermilion pillars, the roof decorated by two carved stone dragons fighting for treasures. Through the array of

peach blossom in the garden outside, you can see Fenghuang city. On the outside walls of the hall is a rare piece of history-eight hand-written slogans surprisingly preserved since the 1911 Revolution.

There are also many places worth visiting around Fenghuang, such as Huangshiqiao Ancient City, a Miao village and market, Qiliang Cave, and of course, the Zhangjiajie National Forest Park. Visitors should not only enjoy the splendour of Fenghuang Ancient City but should also appreciate its traditional culture and ethnicity. The more you understand about Fenghuang, the greater the affection for this time-honoured city.

Translated by Little Penguin

1. Under Fenghuang County plans, no buildings in the protected areas can be demolished (by Hei Man)
2. Many snack stalls along the Tuojiang Old Street sell rice, bean curd and noodles (by Hei Man)
3. Elevated houses in Fenghuang
4. A Miao woman carries her baby (by Hei Man)
5. The works of famous writer Shen Congwen put Fenghuang on the map. Readers from different generations visit the city every year

Travel Tips

Transport

You can fly to the Lotus Airport in Zhangjiajie, then take a train to Jishou, 52 km from Fenghuang. There is a bus from Jishou every half-hour. Or fly to Daxing Airport, less than 30 km from Fenghuang.

Accommodation

Fenghuang County Changqing Guesthouse
Add: Changqing Tower, 129 Chengjian Road, Fenghuang County, Hunan Province
Tel: (743) 3222992 Fax: (743) 3501999

Hongqiao Guangcai Guesthouse
Add: 13 Jianshe Road, Tuojiang Town, Fenghuang County, Hunan Province
Tel: (743) 3221931/ 3229392

Xianglong International Hotel
Add: 46 Jiefang Road, Zhangjiajie City, Hunan Province

Civil Aviation Tourist Villa:
Tel: (744) 8380823/ 8237411 Fax: (744) 8237219

INTO THE WORLD OF EGRETS

Photos & article by Gong Zheng

The egret is regarded as the "monitoring bird of the environment" in global environmental protection circles. There is a popular saying that a place is suitable for man to live if there are egrets, and the place will become prosperous if there are a lot of egrets. Protecting egrets, therefore, is an effective way of looking after the ecology of a region in such economic sectors as forestry, agriculture and tourism. This has been proved right in lots of places in the world.

A large flock of egrets in the sky makes a great scene

The Biggest Fairyland for Egrets

The egret belongs to the Ardeidae family of Ciconllformrs. There are 21 species from 10 subgenus of egret in China out of 61 species from 17 subgenus in the world. The Xiangshan (Elephant Hill) Forestry Centre, 36 km from the city centre in the northern suburbs of Nanchang, capital of Jiangxi Province, offers a beautiful environment and a thick cover of fir trees and bamboo, forming a forest area of 18,000 *mu* (about 1,200 hectares). Every year from March to October, more than 100,000 egrets are attracted here to rest and reproduce. Experts from the World Bank and research by China's nature protection organisations both agree that the largest number and most varieties of egrets can be found in Xiangshan, and it is the largest perching place for the bird. Egrets found in Xiangshan include the elegant great white egret (Egretta alba), intermediate egret (Mesophoyx intermedia), little egret (Egretta garzetta), colourful cattle egret (Bubulcus ibis), green heron (Butorides stiriatus), pond heron (Ardeola bacchus), black-crowned night heron (Nycticorax nyctico rax), and wading purple heron (Ardea purpurea), etc. The number of Chinese

Egret silhouettes appear even more poetic setting sun

egrets (Egretta eulophotes Swinhoe) under second-level state protection has kept increasing every year. Schrenchk's bittern of the Ardeidae family is also found in the Xiangshan forest. Egret families display much love and intimacy. In international film exhibitions or photographic competitions of recent years, images of egrets are always seen and have won the top prizes, indicating the bird is much favoured in photography circles.

A famous Japanese photographer is almost crazy about egrets. He regrets that pollution in Japan is worsening year by year. He is particularly inspired to know that another name for China's Xiamen is

"luniao" (literally meaning "egret"), a large number of egrets fly to Xiangshan and Gongqing City in Jiangxi, or lots of egrets build their nests on the tall trees outside the 510 Hotel and Jingdezhen Hotel in Jiangxi.

Egret a Popular Photographic Model

In China, more and more photographers are keen to shoot egrets,

By locking your camera on a weighty tripod with a flexib
head can ensure you shoot a satisfying close-up of the bir

One must be patient when shooting egrets. Do not snap when one takes off, because very soon the others will follow

A harmonious moment is captured

with more artistic works revealing the beauty of the egret published in newspapers or hung in exhibitions. The egret is also one of the most popular subjects for mainland or overseas collectors. Its image is constantly printed on postcards, stamps, calendars and pictorials.

Egret pictures with a personalised theme are always welcome. Some people love to present the egret's striking poses, while others highlight the tears and joys of its family life. For competition entries, black-and-white photos contrasting light and shade as well as the bird's special movements might be more effective. The photographers, while taking pictures of these "friends of human beings", have indirectly raised awareness for the need to protect the birds.

A special beam of light creates a completely different atmosphere

Photography Tips

Camera & lens: The right choice of photographic equipment is half the battle in taking a good egret picture. Despite the traditional manual 135 camera, an auto focus camera, especially the one with eye control focus, can help you grab the bird's most lively moments. Commonly used lens are 400mm and 500mm. By addinga 2x+ lens, and locking on a solid tripod, you can easily take close-ups. Match with a 70~200mm or 100~400mm shockproof zoom lens, and you can take pictures without the tripod.

Film & filter: Professional films can produce a better effect. For example, by using Kodak PLB 400°C film on sunny or cloudy days between 08:00~17:00, you may shoot at 1/500 sec. or 1/1000 sec., with a F8/11 aperture. Satisfactory results can be achieved by adapting common developing methods. If you are not using speed film, try Kodak Gold 100°C, Agfa XPG100°C, Fuji 100°C, or Lekai GB100°C, etc. and shoot as if using a 400°C. Increase the time to 1 min. 20 sec. ~1 min. 40 sec. when finishing the films. If the contrast is too large, you may use Fuda black-and-white 400°C (panchromatic emulsion no. 001) which has lower contrast than Lekai SHD400°C and is more suitable for photographing on sunny days. If you do not wish to adjust the colour tones on purpose, a filter is not needed. If the background is blue sky, you may use a polarized filter. For an auto focus lens, one should use a circular polarized lens.

Going West

Photos by Cheng Lei, Xie Guanghui
Article by Cheng Lei

Good reading can equate to great living? I think it is not too far behind. I forget the 737 I am in. Or even momentarily the thrill of flying over the origins of the Silk Road, over the Heavenly Mountains (Tianshan), and that my future is as effervescent as the witty dialogue in this book on my lap, while diners around me continue the speedy shift of food to mouth, with loud pleasure.

To be is a deeply happy event.

Just off the plane, we ate lamb off the bone straight out of the clay oven, and drank cold beer opposite Uygur people enjoying the same. Hustle and bustle, indeed, at this bazaar, everything was skewered and chillis were ever present. Around me, were wiry men in white caps, women with floral headscarves and mama hips.

The Touristy Trip to Tianchi

The driver is trying to pick up the 23-year-old tour guide who used to be a nurse. Our group is made up of two old ladies with Marge Simpson hair, two old men with comb-overs dressed in neat chinos, a bow-legged young man whose annoying mobile with an irritating ringing tone that goes incessantly, and the unhappy couple in the back. I am wondering whether Heavenly Lake (Tianchi) will be as awe-.nspiring as the great Niagara Falls.

Not quite. Although impressive. Especially in colour. It is that young blue, aqua we called it in high school art, the colour of the eyes of Scandinavian beauties. Legend has it—some legends are a crock, sounding decidedly dodgy, as if some forward-thinking ancestor knew it would make entry fees more justifiable if a legend was involved and conveniently engraved on a tablet, or perhaps our forebears were good bedtime—story spinners. This one involves dragons (naturally) and a most powerful queen, Jade Mother whose footbath was Heavenly Lake. I concentrate on best camera angles and stop to pose with a baby lamb and a Kazak boy. For two yuan, of course.

Lunch is in a woollen tent, the Kazaks' version of a caravan, I guess. While the family prepared a meal of rice to eat with the fingers and lamb skewers, we marveled at the colourful interior of the tent. Goat skulls, Dongbolas and owl-feather hats hung on the walls, while midday sun from the tent's opening shone on the food already put out: *nang* (baked cake), cream cheese, fried pastry, biscuits. After much photographing, especially in costume, we made a start on the food, washing it down with milky tea.

An afternoon shopping tour included a gem store, a carpet factory and finally the Erdaoqiao Bazaar. Salespeople are pushy and remind me of those in Tijuana. At the bazaar, legs of lamb compete with jewellery and Turkish vases. I cannot buy sabres because they are not allowed to be carried on the plane. So I settle for dried fruit and dried rose petals.

Dinner at the Islam Hotel was a family affair—I ordered though. By the end we felt we had eaten about two lambs each. To walk it off, we strolled along Zhongshan Road and them by cab to Wuyi Market, where there were the usual stalls selling the usual things.

Riding with the Kazak

Baiyanggou (White Willow Gully) is one of those places the Kazaks run for tourists, with food, horse riding, photographs, even a shack of a toilet. It was odd, though, to have a strange man sitting on the horse behind me. Apparently these horses were not "licensed" ("black" horses, if you like) and we had to go up to a small waterfall by a narrow hilly path, so it was good for a useless rider like me to have reinforcements. The scenery was lush, the sound of constant running water soothing and pleasant. Tall cypresses stood in neat rows in contrast to small wildflowers dotted at their feet and butterflies flitting about. Between my non-existent Kazak and the rider's bad Chinese, I

found out he was 31, about to emigrate to Kazakstan, but return for the summer season when tourism is booming. He had the light eyes and the high cheekbones that differentiate his people from the Uygurs.

Tear in Urümqi

Which are easier, tears for someone unknown or tears for the beloved? Empathy makes the question irrelevant. As army trucks rolled out of the Youth Palace in the centre of town, we stood aside aghast, but sickly fascinated. The condemned with their executioners. Twenty-something, all of them, the soldiers proud (?) in green, tall, righteous, their captives in the last outfits they will wear alive, bound and discreetly gagged with thin white threads at the throat. One such man is facing me, one eye beaten and swollen, the other defiant, his thin lips curl almost in a sneer. A sneer of fear. My ex-army friend tells me that once they arrived at the shooting ground and were given a kick off the truck, nobody, be he merciless killer or fearless robber, could hardly stand upright. The trucks kept rolling; a woman, the crowd gasps. The lifers come last, not forced to stand up but kneeling instead among the soldiers. Sirens and more sirens wail their displeasure. A heartbreaking moment, surely, for the dead, the about to die, their lovers and mothers.

Relatives

S once said, the Chinese are never truly alone because of all those extended families. That aside, I have been away from mine for far too long. I even avoid extended periods of contact with those who live close to me. But it is different to ring 12 hours before and tell family I haven't seen for 20 years that I am coming, then spend the next four nights in close proximity with them. The bonds of family, you see, make rapport instant, warm, natural.

Catching up with family can be a chore, but I did not find it so with my aunt and uncle, who are pleasant and warm, speaking in their Hunan accent that's had its edges rubbed off after more than 40 years in Urümqi. It must be strange but interesting for them too—this young woman they last saw 20 years ago whose greatest joy was lollies, now sitting before them, grown up and sounding like any adult. We talked late into the night, of family relationships, of those no longer with us, of secrets even.

The last night was like an awards ceremony, everyone gave us different presents—a beautiful book on Xinjiang, souvenirs, Osmen makeup, a plethora of nuts and dried fruits, pomegranate wine. We took family photographs and wrote contact details. But it did not stop us crying in the morning, my auntie and I, my cousins, when we left.

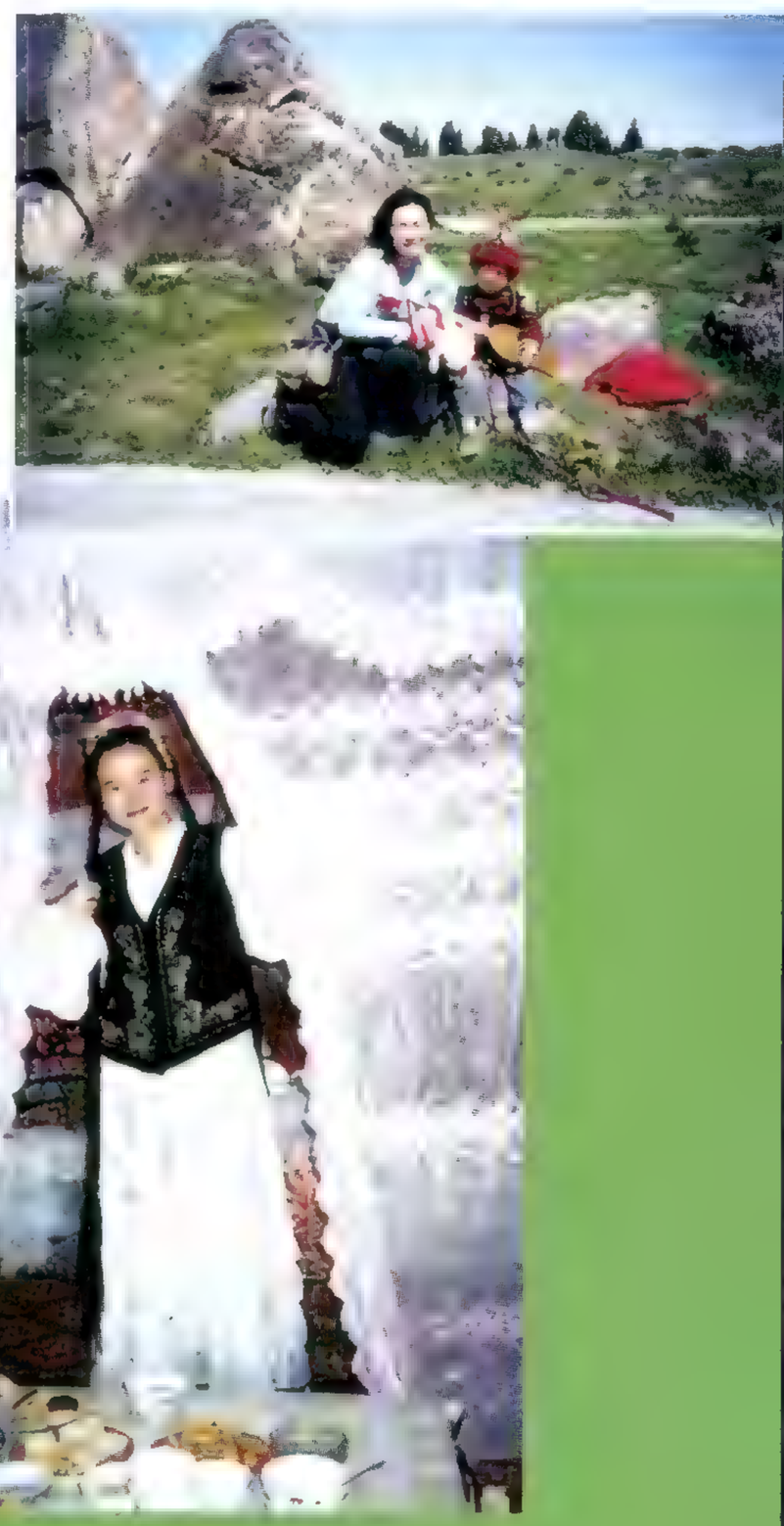
One Hot Day

There is something about pain that colours the landscape. As my stomach was torn and ground into congealed blood, we drove through Asia's largest wind-generated power station, a forest, if you will, of giant grey turbines. They are whirling Mercedes Benz logos perched on tall poles. Through eyes red with hurt, it was a surreal sight, like the ghostly township of Salem's Lot in Stephen King's book-wind, whirling, baking sun and our miniscule vehicle driving straight into the never-never.

Stranger still, the scenery to come. Flaming Mountain, where Magic Monkey's famous battle with the Iron Fan Princess was staged, appeared out of gusts of dusty wind. It is not red, nor is the resemblance to open flames particularly close, but Turpan is a hot place, hence the name.

Tourist trap or treasure? As a non-archaeologist, I would say the Bezikelik Grottoes belong to the former. It is supposedly a cultural relic of the Buddhism faith, before Xinjiang's inhabitants were converted to Islam. Expecting grandeur, I discovered obliteration. Stolen by the Europeans, damaged by the Red Guards, neglected by the Muslims. We found entire walls missing; some were taken back to England and destroyed during the World War II bombings. On every delicately rendered Buddha's face, someone with a Mao badge and burning adolescent enthusiasm diligently smeared clay to wipe out the contours. I was told there were Buddha statues, then five years later they were headless, then limbless, now no statues. A few half-yuan bills floated on the collection rock. We peered into the unopened caves and found ladders, painting equipment, Buddha tracings.

Grape Gully is better, my relatives promised. It was also the lunch venue. Underneath the vines, we sat on a bed eating mixed noodles and lamb skewers, drinking cold beer. Even under the sheltering vines, the siesta air was thick, movements were slow and lazy, the dried fruit vendors were playing chess with different coloured raisins. After lunch, however, there was an urgent nature's call—the cook gestured towards the grapevines. So I did. Oh, the memorable emergencies: cobblestone streets in Macao, the Louvre in Paris, the pastures in New Zealand, now the vineyard in Turpan.



The Diary of Our Dream Tour

Photos by Hans Brandon Artiste in Cam

Yunnan, a place of complex topography and beautiful landscapes, is always a traveller's dreamland. This Easter, we finally realised our dream.

Entering Lijiang

Itinerary: Shenzhen—Lijiang—Jade Dragon Snow Mountain—Lijiang

With mounting excitement, our small party flew from Shenzhen direct to Lijiang on March 28. As soon as we got off the plane, we felt refreshed by the highlands. We quickly ate lunch and couldn't wait to take a taxi along Shangri-La Boulevard to the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. However, upon reaching the entrance to the mountain, we were told the cableway had been closed due to strong winds on the peak. Disappointed, we had to return to Lijiang city.

In checking out the ancient city, we walked everywhere through the maze of streets and interconnecting lanes. The hundred-year-old slab-stone paths, as smooth as mirrors, reflect the town's prosperous age and the buildings are classic and original. We stayed at the Dongba Guesthouse where a hospitable host looked after us. The guests relaxed outside in the courtyard swapping travel tales.

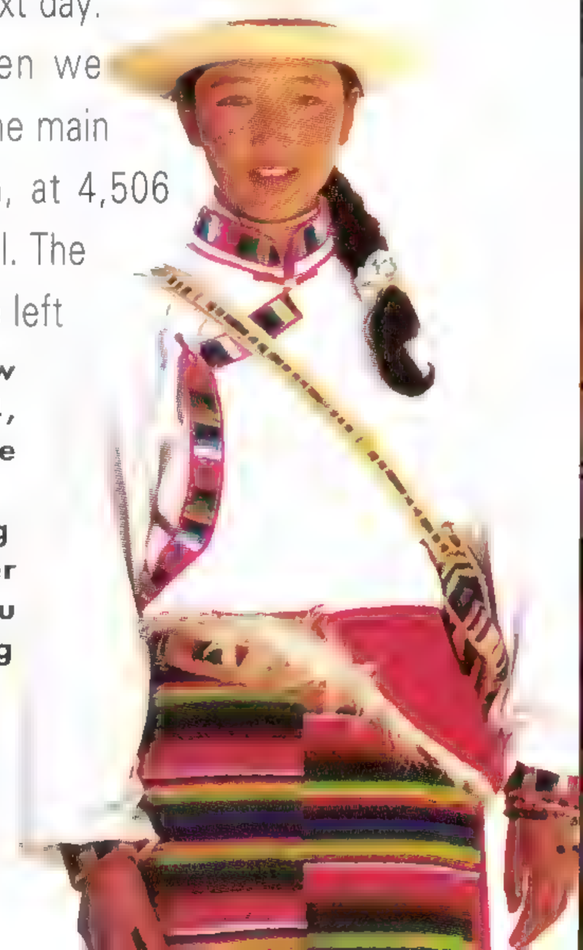
Three Times to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain

Itinerary: Lijiang—Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (Yak Terrace/White Water River/Yunshan Terrace/Shanzidou)

We were woken by the particularly clear highlands sunshine early next morning and headed back to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. This time, we were able to take the cableway and reach Yak Terrace. At the northernmost part of the Snow Mountain scenic area, Yak Terrace covers 16.6 sq km and is dotted with villages of the Yi and Tibetan people, and surrounded by snow-capped mountain ranges and virgin forest. We climbed the mountain on yaks' back, absorbing views of the striking Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

Coming down the mountain, we passed along the Baishui (White Water) River on the way to Yunshan Terrace. Touching the crystal clear water was an unforgettable experience, because it was actually freezing cold. Occupying about one square kilometre, Yunshan Terrace is at the eastern foot of the Jade Dragon. Thousand-year-old fir trees around the grassy terrace seemed to reach for the sky. We found a rarely used mountain path near the terrace. Walking along it for about 30 minutes, we were surprised to see some azaleas blooming in the mountain valley. The flowers added a dash of colour to the relatively plain hillside. Then suddenly the skies opened and it rained heavily. We left the place hastily thoroughly wet through.

Undaunted we went up the mountain again the next day. Our spirits rose when we stood on Shanzidou, the main peak of Jade Dragon, at 4,506 metres above sea level. The wind was fierce so we left



1. Baimang Snow Mountain soars 4,300 metres into the sky
2. Lijiang in the morning
3. A meandering river on the Dêqên Plateau
4. A Tibetan girl living in the highlands

1

Jade Dragon for our next stop—Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Thrills in Tiger Leaping Gorge

Itinerary: Qiaotou Town—Upper Tiger Leaping Gorge—Middle Tiger Leaping Gorge—bottom of valley—Lower Tiger Leaping Gorge

It was after three in the afternoon when we passed Qiaotou Town and reached Tiger Leaping Gorge. All along we felt the force of the gorge. The turbulent Jinsha (Golden Sand) River roared in the valley bottom. Drifting sand and broken stones were spread everywhere on the road. Large vehicles passing us stirred up lots of sand and dust making us feel as if we were in a remote desert. More than two hours later, we came to a place where the rock had been blasted. A huge pile of accumulated rocks at least four metres high completely blocked the road. However, we decided to take a risk and go on. We carefully climbed over the pile step by step, though large rocks could have fallen at any moment and injured or even killed us. Fortunately we all successfully got through.

It was already evening when we reached the Middle Tiger Leaping Gorge. Lodging at a guesthouse built on a cliff, we could still hear the wind whistling down the gorge all night.

Next morning we walked to the bottom of the valley along a narrow, rough path built by villagers. Below the winding foot-wide path was a bottomless valley. Above the steep sides of the gorge the sky was no more than a bright ribbon. A few large rocks stood in the water as if they were guarding the entrance. They were the famous Tiger Leaping Rocks. A waterfall plunged to the valley floor, creating a thick cloud of misty spray.

The path climbed higher, passing wide, green terraced fields. Our trek through Tiger Leaping Gorge ended at the small mountain village of Hetaoyuan (Walnut Garden).

We took a bus from Hetaoyuan to Haba

Lunch on Haba Snow Mountain

Itinerary: Walnut Garden—Haba Village—Haba Snow Mountain

Village in Shangri-La County. On the way we stayed in the Haba Guesthouse, a building with simple facilities owned by a hospitable Naxi family. The host even made traditional Tibetan butter tea for us. Their warmth swept away our tiredness.

Next morning, we started climbing Haba Snow Mountain at a height of 2,700 metres above sea level. Remarkable flowering azaleas as large as Chinese embroidered silk balls grew along the precipitous mountain paths among dense vegetation. When we reached the snow line at 3,800 metres, we could hardly walk in the soft accumulated snow. One could easily slip and the wet snow made my legs cold and damp. I began to shiver and my heartbeat speeded up-a reaction to the thin highland air. When we saw a large frozen lake-Black Lake - we knew we had already reached the main northern peak of Haba Snow Mountain at 4,200 metres high. Forgetting our weariness and coldness, we lit a fire beside the lake and enjoyed a rich and warm lunch under the direction of the tour guide. The weather was changeable on the peak, a mixture of strong wind or snow. After traversing misty mountain paths and a primitive forest, we arrived at Haba Village.

Next day we took a car to Qiaotou Town,

3

March to Meili Snow Mountain

Itinerary: Qiaotou Town—Zhongdian—Dêqên—East Zhulin Monastery—Baimang Snow Mountain—Meili Snow Mountain—Mingyong Glacier

and then caught a bus to Zhongdian. Zhongdian City is more than 3,000 metres above sea level and was still freezing cold despite the bright afternoon sunlight. The following morning we headed for Meili Snow Mountain in Dêqên in a jeep. The route to the mountain was also tortuous. Our car had to pass the Yashe (Duck's Tongue) in the valley and another mountain range that offered us a change of scenery. Our eyes later feasted on the "Three Rivers"—Nujiang River, Lancang River and Golden Sand River, as well as the Hengduan Mountains. When we stopped to take photos at the Ping'an (Peace) Pagoda, we saw the colourful Tibetan prayer streamers waving in the wind.

We drove by car to East Zhulin Monastery in Benzilan, a Tibetan Buddhist building featuring numerous precious relics and Buddhist musical instruments. Two lamas were blowing horns to call all the lamas to prayer, and the scene was spectacular.

Meandering along the Yunnan-Tibet Highway, we soon reached the centre of the Baimang Snow Mountain Nature Reserve. To the north and then 10 km eastward was the famous Meili Snow Mountain with its 13 peaks at an average height of over 6,000 metres. Kargebo, the main peak, is 6,740 metres above sea level. Regarded as the first of eight sacred mountains in China, it is both Yunnan's principal peak and a mecca for pilgrims of Tibetan Buddhism. We stayed in Mingyong Village at the foot of the peak. Mingyong Glacier not far from the village extends from highlands of 5,500 metres down to a forest zone at 2,700 metres, like a long silvery dragon flying through the mountains.

Life on the Plateau

Itinerary: Mingyong Village—Bita Lake—Shuodu Lake—Songzanlin Monastery—Zhongdian—Lijiang—Shenzhen

We passed Bita Lake on the way to Zhongdian on the next day. Three kilometres long and one kilometre wide, the lake is surrounded by grasslands and extremely green. On its banks wild horses enjoying the sunlight grazed leisurely. We felt we were in a paradise on earth. Afterwards, we visited Shuodu Lake about 10 km to the north of Bita Lake. At this bigger lake covering an area of 15 sq km, one could appreciate the tranquil life of people living in the highlands.

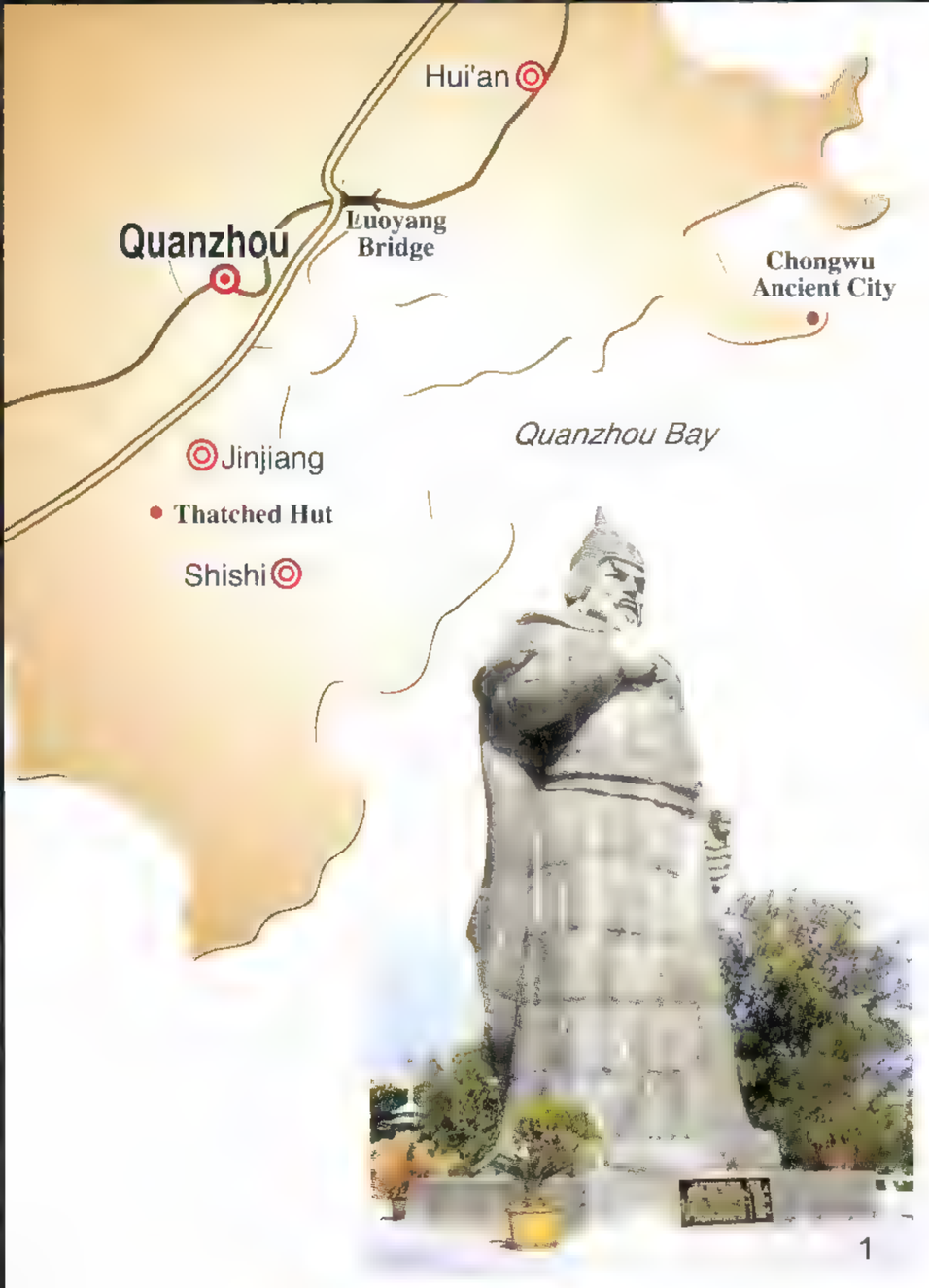
It was almost evening. Our car drove through wide grasslands and entered Songzanlin Monastery high in the mountains. The south-facing monastery is built like five-storey watchtower. Sometimes the sound of lamas praying drifted up. The bronze roof gilded with gold on the top looked splendid under the setting sun. And our 12-day journey of realising our Shangri-La dream was coming to an end.

Expenditure for 12 days

1. Return flight tickets between Shenzhen and Lijiang: RMB 2,300/ person
2. Car fare: Lijiang to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (80~120/ day); Zhongdian to Bita Lake/ Shidu Lake/ Songzanlin Monastery (150 yuan/ day); Zhongdian to Dêqên (500 yuan/ day)
3. Food: 10 yuan/ person on average
4. Accommodation (per day): Lijiang (20 yuan/ person); Zhongdian (50 yuan/ person); Dêqên (40 yuan/ person)

   Total expenditure: 5,600/ person

1. A Yi woman shepherd in Haba village
2. The river roars far below the cliff guesthouse in Middle Tiger Leaping Gorge
3. Lamas flock to the East Zhulin Monastery for prayers
4. A child living in Yak Terrace



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Heritage Tour of *Quanzhou*

Photos & article by Tsang Po Ki

The city of Quanzhou in Fujian Province is widely regarded as the starting point of the maritime silk road. As early as the Tang Dynasty (618—907) it was already one of the four major ports communicating via trade, culture and religion with South and Southeast Asian and Arabian countries. Because of its prosperity, Quanzhou was invaded by Japanese pirates in the Ming Dynasty. As a witness to history, the foreign architecture built during those periods, together with other historical sites in Quanzhou, form a rich and colourful heritage with a wealth of historical relics and other tourist attractions.

Chongwu Ancient City — Ming Dynasty Castle Embraced by the Sea

A one and a half hour bus ride from Quanzhou brought us to Hui'an County. From there we walked to the ancient city of Chongwu that faces across the sea to the island of Taiwan, at its closest point only 140 nautical miles away. The construction of the Ming Dynasty city wall and fortress began in 1387, the 20th year in the reign of Emperor Hongwu. Built from granite, it was meant to resist the attacks of Japanese pirates. Despite all the years of war and exposure to the elements, it is still one of the best-preserved stone city walls along China's coast.

Chongwu's ancient city wall and fortress were first built in the Ming Dynasty. More than 100 years after its construction, it was captured in 1558 by Japanese pirates after a six-day siege that resulted in many casualties and much destruction to the city. It was not until April 1567 that the city wall and fortress were rebuilt, guided by the national hero Qi Jiguang, commander-in-chief of the Fujian army. He also established a whole set of military regulations. The newly built city wall was over 2,000 metres long, seven metres high and five metres wide at the base. It included 26 barracks and 1,304 battlements, plus parapets, gate towers, arrow holes and beacon towers, a truly powerful defensive structure.

Luoyang Bridge — Unique Stone Erection

The Luoyang Bridge is another well-known example of Quanzhou's priceless ancient architecture. Located in Luoyang Town west of Hui'an

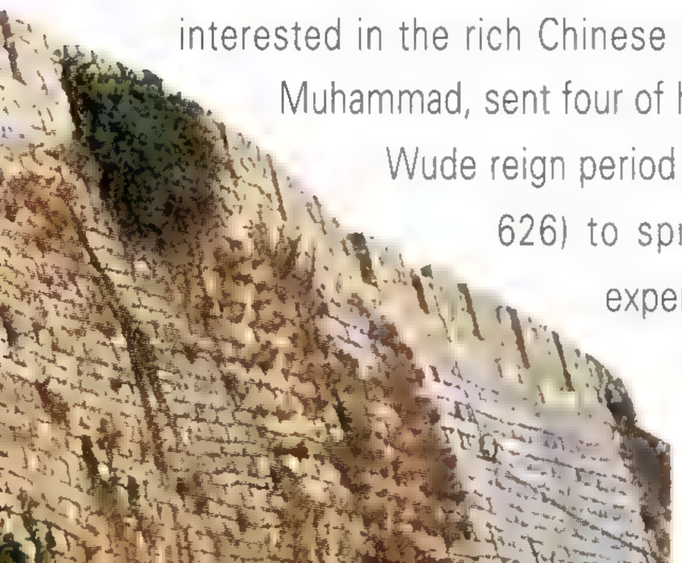
County, this stone bridge was completed in 1059. Also called the Wan'an Bridge, it connects Quanzhou with Hui'an. As society developed, another, much wider bridge with a smoother surface, built for motor traffic, appeared some years ago. Now only bicycle riders and people pushing handcarts use the old bridge.

The structure of the bridge may seem nothing special. But looking down at the piers you can see they are made of huge rocks shaped like boats with pointed ends. Such a design cuts the force of the current and reduces the buffeting from waves. By using the buoyancy of the sea, builder Cai Xiang had heavy pieces of slate moved into place between the piers. He then ordered that a large number of oysters be bred under the bridge, so their accumulated shells would adhere to the base and piers and join them together. He was the first to advocate this method of bridge construction. People later set up a statue and a stele in front of the stone bridge in memory of this great man.

Lingshan Sacred Tombs —Relics from Islam's Eastward Influence

Quite a few foreigners had visited Quanzhou long before the Japanese invasion. In the Tang Dynasty, as maritime transport flourished from Guangzhou to Quanzhou, Citong Port (the ancient name of Quanzhou) became the biggest port in the Orient. Encouraged by the government's tolerance of and willingness to embrace foreign ideas, China began to make economic, cultural and religious exchanges with neighbouring Southeast and South Asia. Ten cities flourished along the coast. The Arabs were especially interested in the rich Chinese culture. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, sent four of his disciples to China during the Wude reign period of Tang Emperor Gaozu (618—626) to spread Islamic teaching and to experience Chinese culture. The first was sent to Guangzhou, the second to Yangzhou, and the third and fourth came to Quanzhou. Very dutiful and attentive to their mission, they merged well with the local population. Much loved by the Chinese, after they died they were buried at Lingshan and honoured with the title of Sage. The stories of the two virtuous men, carved on shuttle-shaped columns, not only deeply touched local people but court official Zheng He too. In his fifth voyage to the Occident via Quanzhou, he came to pay homage to the Sages, leaving a stele by their tombs to show his respect.

As well as that of the Third and Fourth Sages, there are many more Muslim tombs. Every year after the Fast-breaking Festival, Muslims use to come to pay homage to the sages after a ceremony held at the Pure and Clean Mosque in Quanzhou. At a peaceful location deep in the mountains, the Lingshan tomb looks especially secluded under the soughing trees. It would be better to visit the tomb with companions.



- [redacted]
  Ancient City in Hui'an, and costs 8.5 yuan. The bus fare from the Ancient Town to Luoyang Bridge is 7 yuan, and from the bridge to the Lingshan Sacred Tomb is 3 yuan
- **Opening hours:** Chongwu Ancient City: 7:00~18:30 (summer); 7:30~17:30 (winter). The best time to visit the Lingshan Sacred Tomb is at noon
- **Entrance fee:** 15 yuan for Chongwu Ancient City, 3 yuan for the Lingshan Sacred Tomb.
- **Note:** Some of the buses from Quanzhou to Chongwu Ancient City terminate at Chongwu Town instead of reaching the gate of the Ancient City Wall. As walking there may take 30 minutes, it would be best to check the route before getting on the bus

1. A statue of Qi Jiguang commemorates this national hero
2. Chongwu, surrounded on three sides by sea, is only 140 nautical miles from Taiwan at the closest point
3. The Luoyang Bridge connects Quanzhou City and Hui'an County. This famous old Chinese stone bridge over strait took six years and eight months of arduous work to build
4. Women in Hui'an are noted for their industry and frugality

Kaiyuan Temple — Key Buddhist Temple in Fujian

At its peak the more than 1,000-year-old Kaiyuan Temple boasted 120 sub-temples and over 1,000 monks. The grand Hall of Sakyamuni, the simple yet elegant Sweet Dew Altar, and the wonderful Eastern and Western Pagodas retain their brilliance despite all the impact of foreign culture.

The temple has an area of 78,000 square metres in the heart of Quanzhou City. West Street is thriving, chock-a-block with all kinds of shops and stalls: a florist, children's clothing store, pet shop, grocery store, bakery, shoe maker, fruit shop, pharmacy, stationery shop and so on. Clearly Kaiyuan Temple is part of Quanzhou's people's lives.

The temple was built in 686 in the Tang Dynasty. Symmetrically designed, the Purple Cloud Screen, Hall of Heavenly King, Hall of Worship, Sakyamuni Hall, Sweet Dew Altar and the Depository of Buddhist Scriptures all stand along a central axis. The Sakyamuni Hall is also called Hundred-Column Hall, with 86 huge columns, each taking two people to encircle, and five golden statues of Buddha. The Sweet Dew Altar is full of classical elegance, and the most venerated Buddha of Esoteric Buddhism, Losana, sits high on a lotus throne.

In front of the Sakyamuni Hall stand two square stone towers in the specific architectural style of Brahmanism. On its eastern and western sides are the Tang Dynasty Zhenguo Pagoda and the Renshou Pagoda built in the Five Dynasties period (907—960). They are known locally as the Eastern and Western Pagodas. The 48.27-metre high Zhenguo Pagoda and the 45.06-metre Renshou Pagoda are treasures of classical Chinese architecture as well as the symbols of Quanzhou. Originally made of wood, they were rebuilt using granite in the late Jin Dynasty (1115—1234) as imitation wood towers with five floors and eight sides. The tower walls still retain 384 exquisite relief statues, mostly illustrating stories from Buddhist scriptures and folk tales.

➥ **Opening hours:** 6 30~18 00

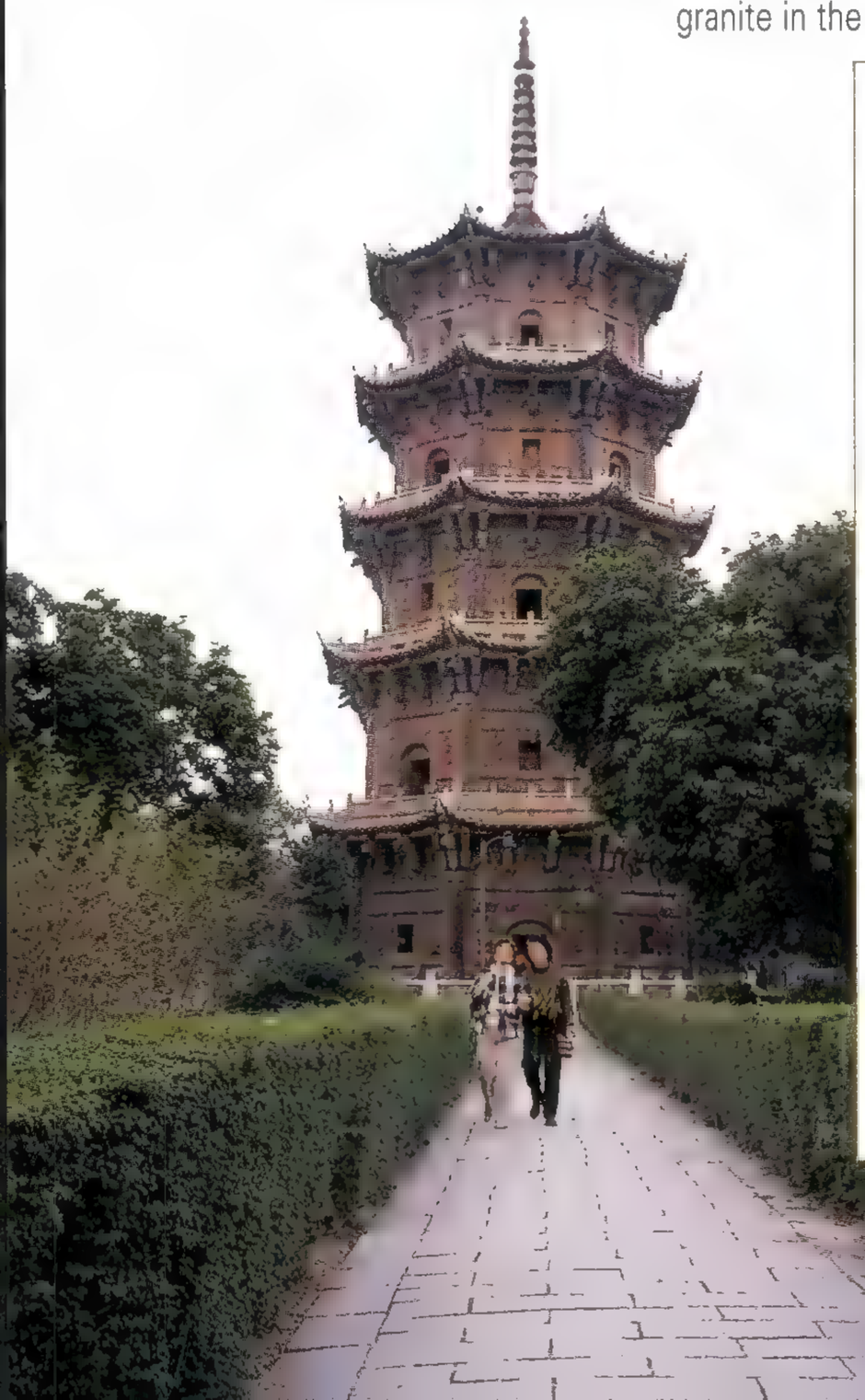
➥ **Entrance fee:** 4 yuan (Quanzhou Bay

1

Pure and Clean Mosque — an Arabian Architecture

Tumen Street is as busy as West Street. Halfway along the street stands the exotic architecture of the Pure and Clean Mosque or Ashab Mosque, China's earliest surviving mosque. It is not far from the Kaiyuan Temple and next to the Temple of which attracts a large number of worshippers and pilgrims. They all confirm that Quanzhou was tolerant of different cultures and religions.

I happened to visit the mosque during the Islamic Fast-breaking Festival (Id al Fitr) which all Muslims must attend. From eight in the morning onwards, they came from all around. At 9 a. m. an imam in a soft yellow headgear and grey robe and two assistants began to chant scriptures. I couldn't understand what they said, but it seemed to summon the people together. In about five minutes they entered the hall where there was an altar and a rod like Muhammad used when he preached. The imam conducted the ceremony. He opened the scriptures and led the Muslims in readings. Then he gave a sermon, followed by a group prayer. After the ceremony most of the people left, but I stayed



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Quanzhou Bay Ancient Boats Museum

The museum of ancient boats from Quanzhou is found on the eastern side of Kaiyuan Temple. As Quanzhou was the busy departure point of the maritime silk route, these relics should not be missed. The first thing you meet on entering the hall is a huge wooden ship, broad in the beam and with a V-shaped hull. The vessel is so old and fragile it seems as if one little push might shatter it. Of course no one has the heart to do so. This Song Dynasty (960—1279) ship sank in a narrow river on the foreshore southwest of Houzhu Port in Quanzhou Bay, and was discovered and salvaged by archaeologists from Fujian Province in 1974. It is really very hard to restore a boat over 1,000 years old.

3

The ancient boats cover one floor of the exhibition hall. The other floor features relics excavated from the boats, in 14 categories such as boat components, bamboo and wooden objects or rattan work, spices, drugs, pottery, and fruit stones. There are also models of ancient boats. Along the corridor I saw some stands showing a variety of model boats: a fortune boat good for deep sea navigation; a large junk that could sail in shallow waters; a high-speed boat with paddle wheels on both sides, a large boat that could carry 10,000 pieces of rock, and a magnolia boat that could carry 100 passengers.

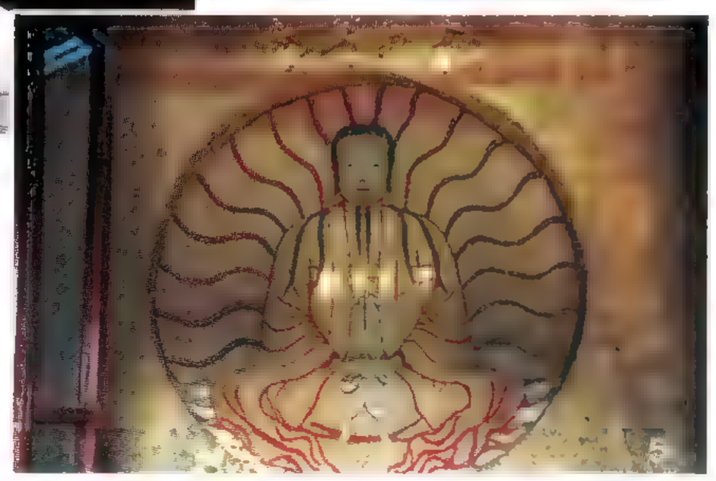
behind to examine the mosque alone. Its Arabian architecture is in the same style as the mosque at Damascus in Syria. Built mostly of blue and white granite in 1009, (400 according to the Moslem Calendar), the mosque covers an area of 2,500 square metres. From the gate tower of granite and diabase, a passage with three different arched doors leads to the quadrangular Mingshan Hall where the Muslims worshipped. Beside the hall is a VIP guest room, in front of which an iron stand displays steles with Arabic inscriptions. Excavated from Quanzhou, they belonged to the early Islamic missionaries. Particularly special are the nine unusually lined stone pillars standing in the lawn by the entrance. Also at the mosque is a very valuable inscribed stone, "The Imperial Edict" signed and issued by Ming Emperor Chengzu in 1407, for the protection of the Pure and Clean Mosque and Islam.

➥ **Opening hours:** 8:00 ~ 18:00 ➥ **Entrance fee:** [illegible]

➥ **Transport:** [illegible]

Thatched Hut — Rare Ruin of Manichaeism

Another religious site—the Thatched Hut of Manichaeism — is at Sunei Village, Luoshan Township, Jinjiang City. First built in the Song Dynasty, the Thatched Hut is the most intact relic of Manichaeism surviving in China today. Manichaeism originated from ancient Persia in the third century and spread to China in 694 of the Tang Dynasty. Its doctrine combines Buddhism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. (Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster, a Persian, and spread to China during the Southern and Northern Dynasties over 1,500 years ago. Its believers can still be found in India and Iran.) Originally built with thatch, the hut was rebuilt in stone in 1399, the fifth year of the Zhiyuan reign period of Emperor Shundi of the Yuan Dynasty, with a Chinese hip-and-gable roof. The followers of Manichaeism carved a relief statue of the Maniprabha Buddha in the granite cliff, which is now in a glass cabinet locked in the hut and believed to be the only sculpture of Maniprabha Buddha in the world. The statue of the Buddha, sitting cross-legged on the lotus throne, is 1.52 metres high and 0.83 metres wide. The Buddha's face is light green, his hands pinkish and his clothes grayish white, blending harmoniously with the colours of the surrounding rock. With lines radiating in all directions at his back, the sculpture looks simple and effective.



In February 1991, a UNESCO team inspecting the maritime silk route came here. It considered the Thatched Hut its biggest find during the trip, and another group was sent to visit the hut in 1997.

Translated by Yu Ling

➥ **Note:** [illegible]

1. A Muslim is enjoying a snack at the Fast-breaking Festival
2. The Eastern and Western Pagodas are landmarks in Quanzhou
3. Inside the Quanzhou Ancient Boats Museum beside the Kaiyuan Temple
4. The Lingshan Sacred Tomb is the permanent resting place of two attentive principles of Muhammad
5. The statue of the Maniprabha Buddha is 1.52 metres high and 0.83 metres wide
6. The Thatched Hut is the best-preserved site of Manichaeism remaining in China

TIMES

Yuanmingyuan Revisited

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong

The Twice-Destroyed Yuanmingyuan

The Yuanmingyuan (Garden of Perfect Splendour) intruded into my life by chance.

At the age of 13, I was enrolled at the Beijing No.101 Middle School, reckoned one of the best middle schools in the capital at that time. I did not know until I started at the school that it was located in the Yuanmingyuan.

The Yuanmingyuan was first constructed in the Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign and was expanded later. During Emperor Qianlong's reign, it reached the height of its magnificence. In the autumn of 1860 an Anglo-French joint force destroyed the Yuanmingyuan. In 1900 the remaining buildings were sacked again by the allied forces of the eight powers.... This was all I knew about the Yuanmingyuan at that stage and had learnt it from history textbooks.

Soon after starting at the school, we new students were taken to the Yuanmingyuan's largest ruin, the Dashuifa, where we listened to a teacher recount the history of the gardens. It was regarded as a lesson in patriotism. I was very affected by the sight of the twice-sacked ruins.

Mischief Makers

In the following days, I kept going back to the Yuanmingyuan. Over a wall and a small ditch, great chaotic piles of stones met my eyes in all directions. The site was occupied by fields, a nursery for young plants, people's communes, a state-owned tree farm and threshing grounds. We were often taken to the nursery where we planted, pruned and whitewashed trees. We were happy there, as we were close to nature.

At that time, we had only two classes in the afternoons. After school we often went jogging in the Yuanmingyuan. There were two reed marshes there, one small and the other large. The small marsh was 800 metres in circumference; and the large one, 2,600 metres. Reeds and paddy rice grew in both marshes. Thanks to the availability of the vast Yuanmingyuan as well as its own sports ground, the Beijing No.101 Middle School always came out on top in the sports competitions for middle schools in Beijing.

If we did not have classes in the afternoon, we would go and play in the Yuanmingyuan- stepping on rubble, climbing the broken heaps of stones or catching fish. In pursuit of the latter, we would stop up a section of ditch then bail out the water. We caught the fish quite easily, until one day a farmer chased us away, shouting: "So you're the mischief makers!" Later, we found out the local farmers irrigated their fields with water from the ditch, and we had been cutting off the supply.

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Shot in the Buttocks

The "cultural revolution" started in 1966. The central authorities announced classes were to be suspended so we could make revolution. We shouted and jumped for joy, because we no longer needed to rack our brains to deal with examinations.

From then on, the people living near the Yuanmingyuan were frequently disturbed by the new "invaders".

In the evenings we would take a walk in the Yuanmingyuan, where we boasted, argued and made mischief. At that time in the Yuanmingyuan there was a peach orchard, and mountain beans tasting like cherries grew there. We liked to raid these patches.

One windy, moonless night, we went to the Yuanmingyuan as usual-eight or nine kids divided into two groups, one group walking in front, and the other behind. As we were picking mountain beans, I suddenly heard a loud shout in the distance. "We've fallen into an ambush," I thought. As we raced back to the school, I heard the sound of farmers chasing us, and then a shot.

Thanks to our running training during the past few years, we reached the school, one after another, in only half an hour. No one was caught but several were injured. Two were sent to the school clinic. One had been hit in the buttocks by a shot from a fowling piece. "How on earth did this happen?" asked the doctor, while picking out pieces of lead from the embarrassing anatomical part with a pair of tweezers. The boy was ashamed to tell him. Another boy had a severe wound in one of his feet from stepping on sharp stubble. Despite the pain, he ran all the way back to the school.

It was a long while before we entered the Yuanmingyuan again.

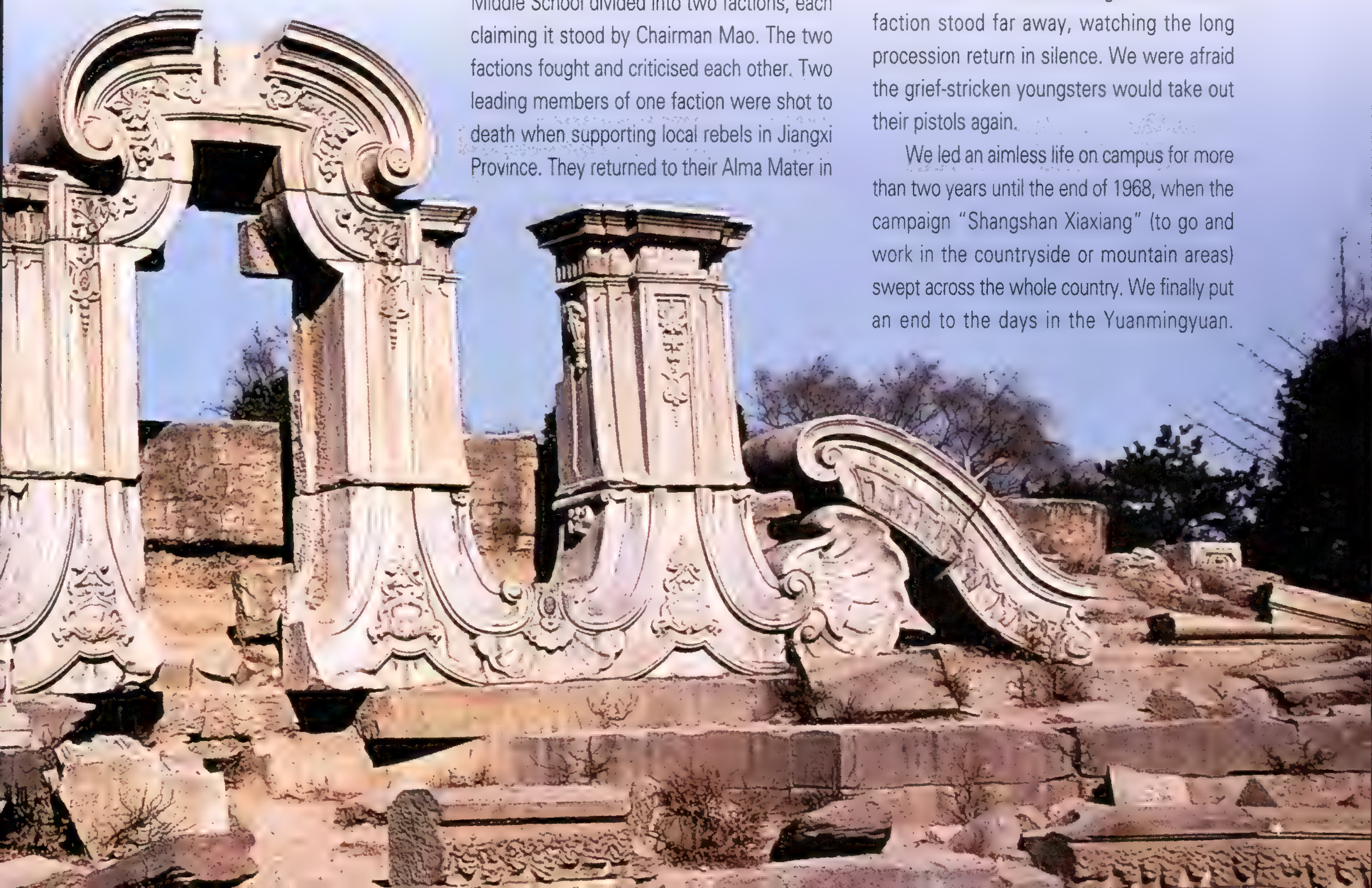
Threat of Pistols

In the second year of the "cultural revolution," the students at the Beijing No.101 Middle School divided into two factions, each claiming it stood by Chairman Mao. The two factions fought and criticised each other. Two leading members of one faction were shot to death when supporting local rebels in Jiangxi Province. They returned to their Alma Mater in the form of two caskets of ashes covered with the faction's flag. Their comrades-in-arms carried the caskets to the Yuanmingyuan. Two young men walking ahead drew pistols and fired into the air as a salute.

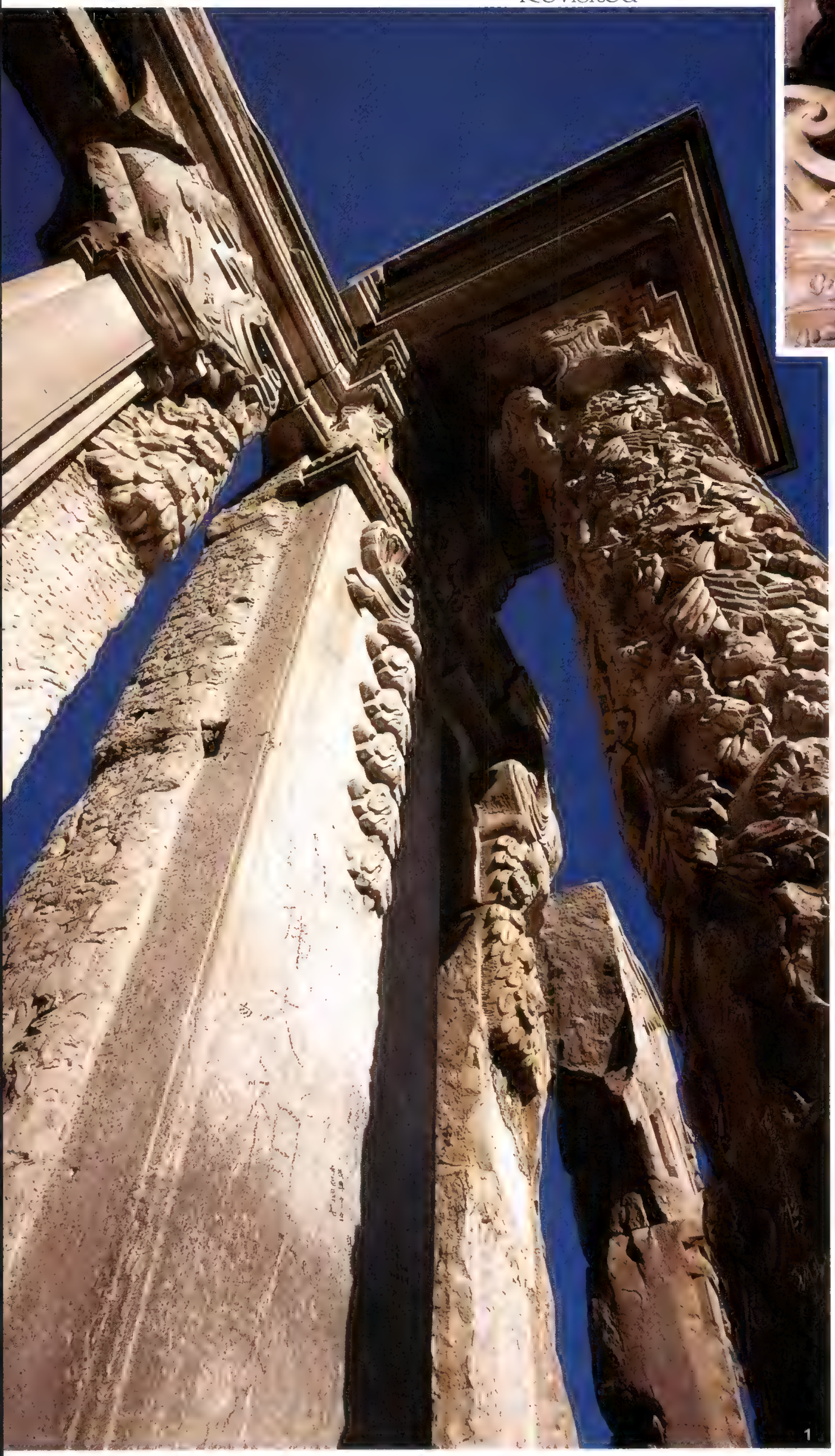
Those of us who belonged to the rival faction stood far away, watching the long procession return in silence. We were afraid the grief-stricken youngsters would take out their pistols again.

We led an aimless life on campus for more than two years until the end of 1968, when the campaign "Shangshan Xiaxiang" (to go and work in the countryside or mountain areas) swept across the whole country. We finally put an end to the days in the Yuanmingyuan.

1. **Before leaving Beijing, we said goodbye to the Yuanmingyuan (writer on the left)**
2. **Young people of that era — uncouth and inarticulate**
3. **Farmers are busily beating barley after the autumn harvest**
4. **The ruins of the Yuanmingyuan are regarded as China's greatest artistic ruins**



Yuanmingyuan Revisited



Shortly before we left Beijing, we agreed to meet at the Yuanmingyuan for the last time. One of our schoolmates brought a camera with him, a luxury commodity only a few people owned at that time. Tears in our eyes, we said our mutual good-byes while beating each other's chests.

Random Stones More Powerful than Original Architecture

Before the Spring Festival in 2002, I came to Beijing with my daughter, a senior high-school student. She wanted to go to the Yuanmingyuan, so I went with her.

It was cold. The Yuanmingyuan was very quiet, with few visitors. I passed the familiar ruins one by one, noticing many changes. The big reed marsh had become a large artificial lake known as the Fuhai (Sea of Happiness). On its northwestern bank is the Fanghu Shengjing (Square Kettle Scenic Spot). A new scenic spot-the Primitive Totem Garden-had been constructed on the Pengdao Yaotai (Fairy Isle and Jade Terrace). The former fields, threshing grounds, nursery for young plants and production teams had all gone with the passage of time. Instead we saw level cement paths, red lanterns, the Science and Technology Exhibition Hall, small shops, arts and crafts stores, and places for taking pictures with a person in imperial costume soliciting customers. Weeds had been replaced by green belts.

It became warm at noon. More visitors arrived. We reached the Xiyanglou (Western Tower), bought admission tickets for the second time, and entered the central ruins encircled by iron railings. Many piles of stones had been rearranged, and new piles added. When I pointed to the Yangquelou (Tower for Raising Sparrows), which is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom, and told my

daughter I had once climbed the tower, she didn't believe me. Since all the old disorderly heaps of stones have been changed it is impossible to climb to the top now.

Soon I saw the Dashuifa.

Thank God! The soul of the Yuanmingyuan was still there, looking so natural. Thirty years previously when I first caught sight of it, I was astonished: Who arranged the broken pillars and stone foundations in this way? They have more power than the original architecture we saw in the restoration model. The great masses of stones combining the fallen with the still standing, form a perfect composition and create a deeply romantic atmosphere. In particular, the group of stones at the top-two horizontal and three vertical-expresses the Chinese people's pent-up emotions and artistic passion.

The Yuanmingyuan ruins have remained splendid, despite ups and downs, earthquakes and wars in the past centuries. I believe they will stand firm forever.

More than a hundred years ago, when two groups of bandits committed crimes here, they did not intend to leave anything which would forever inspire a sense of national dignity.

I believe no matter how great an artist is, he should be opposed if he had the Dashuifa pulled down and rebuilt. Because the Dashuifa ruins are already deep in people's hearts, and have become the symbol of the Yuanmingyuan. A few years ago, I was astonished to hear that some people had suggested the Yuanmingyuan should be restored to its Qianlong period splendour. At that time, I was not able to write an article, and did not know which department or which individuals I should approach to stop this stupid proposal. Just imagine this: if a new park were to be built with new materials and methods, it would be a complex of modern construction in the ancient style. But we would lose the feeling of history, as well as China's most artistically expressive ruins.

I believe the souls of the allied forces of the eight powers, reviled for over a hundred years, would clap and cheer upon hearing the proposal, as they would no longer be cursed with the evidence of their crime expunged.

Preserving the "Scene of a Crime" Committed in 1900

When I took a picture of my daughter at the Dashuifa ruins, the sight suddenly struck a chord in my heart-making me think of the farewell gathering held here. I felt very sad:

Thirty years previously in this place, also in a cold wind, our group of young people of the same age met here. The only difference was we were uncouth and inarticulate. These days the young people of my daughter's generation wear "Nike" brand shoes, and listen to music downloaded from the Internet. The things she sees, thinks, enjoys and expects now are much better than what her father experienced at her age.

I don't know why I cherish the memory of the Yuanmingyuan of the past so much.

I like the natural background: lush wild grass and bushes half covered the ruins, and a cold wind always blew, creating a desolate ambience.

I like the heart-breaking ruins, so close to the moving and tragic beauty of the "scene of a crime" committed in 1900.

I like the feeling of surprise when I walked into the birch forest along a small path, and found broken walls in the wilds after crossing a hillock.

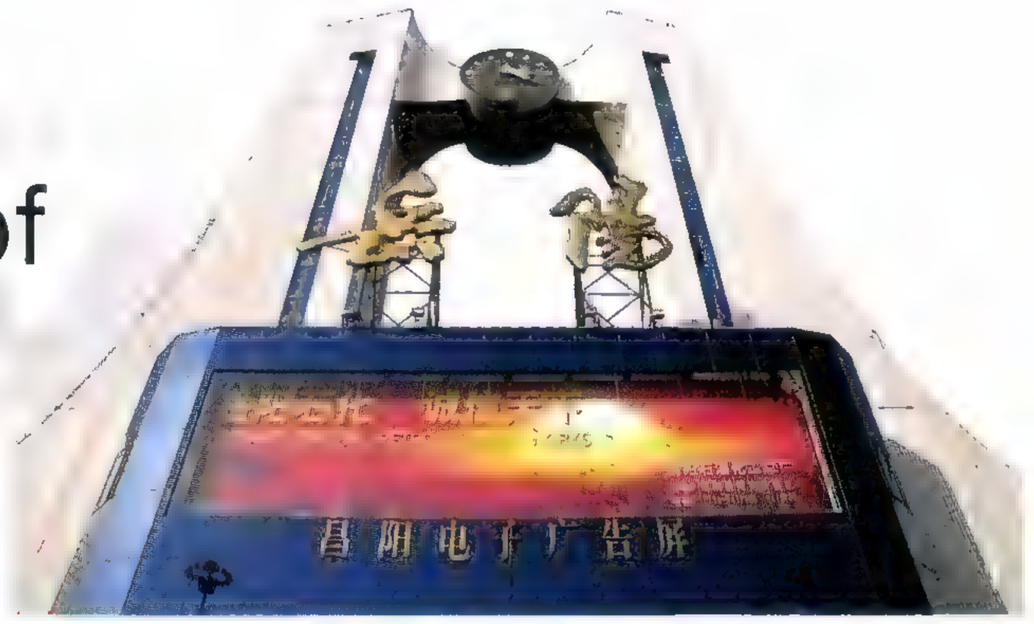
I like to watch farmers and fishermen at work, and students reading books.

I would like to take a walk there again on a windy moonless night, staring all around, with no one criticising or laughing at me. And I would not need to buy an admission ticket...

1. **Beautifully carved stone pillars soar into the sky**
2. **Romantic artistic styles can be seen everywhere**
3. **Stone carvings by the Yangque Tower show Western influences**
4. **A restored part of the ruins**
5. **My daughter at the Dashuifa**

The Ancient City of Yueyang

Photos & article by Long Jiang

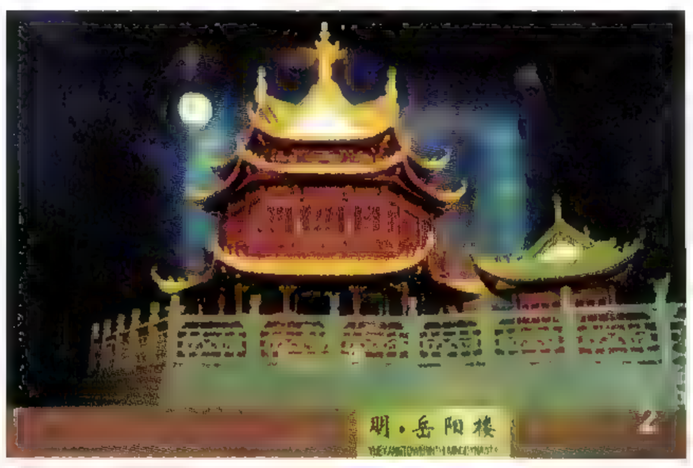


Yueyang is a 2,500-year-old city. As it is located in northern Hunan Province where Dongting Lake and the Yangtse River meet, the city is considered the "north gate" of Hunan. During the Three Kingdom period (220—280), when the states of Wu and Shu fought for the control of Jingzhou in neighbouring Hubei Province, the commanders of Wu, Zhou Yu and Lu Su, stationed their troops here. Baqiu City built by Lu Su was the origin of today's Yueyang.

Fan Zhongyan Made Yueyang Tower Famous

I arrived in Yueyang and saw for myself the Yueyang Tower standing by Dongting Lake. Among the three most famous towers in southern China, this is said to be the only one retaining its original features. The other two, Huanghe Tower in Hubei and Tengwang Tower in Jiangxi, are no longer in their original state and even their locations have been changed.

Yueyang Tower's fame became widespread when "The Story of Yueyang Tower" was written after the building was renovated in the Song Dynasty (960—1279). That clever writer Fan Zhongyan was invited by friends to come to the tower and contribute this brilliant piece, in which he expressed his worries about the country and its people and also showed his wide-ranging knowledge. Since then, Yueyang Tower has been world famous and Fan's lines, "Take the worries under heaven as your own worries; Find your own happiness after all under heaven are happy" have served as a motto for Chinese scholars and officials in later dynasties.



A Stage for Scholars and Literati

From the top floor of Yueyang Tower, one can see the endless waters of Dongting Lake. It's an inspiring and thought-provoking view.

Lu Su of the Wu Kingdom built the origins of Yueyang Tower to command his navy's exercises. Though a military facility, it later attracted the literati as a place to drink and write. The tower was called Baqiu Tower during the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420—589), the current name Yueyang having emerged in the Tang Dynasty (618—907). Its largest reconstruction took place in the Song Dynasty under the supervision of Teng Zejing, because the building was not considered magnificent enough to complement the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Over the last 1,700 years, the tower has been destroyed and rebuilt at least 30 times according to written records. It has been a

1. **The Yueyang Railway Station**
2. **Yueyang Tower as it was in the Ming Dynasty**
3. **The origins of the tower were built by Lu Su in the Three Kingdom period for naval training**
4. **Yueyang Tower is one of the three most famous ancient towers built on the southern banks of the Yangtse**

4

witness to history.

The existing building was constructed in 1984 based on its Qing Dynasty design with three layers of eaves and a helmet-like roof. The wooden structure looks striking and imposing.

Numerous people in literary circles visited Yueyang Tower, including the most famous poets Li Bai, Du Fu, Liu Yuxi, Zhang Yiuling, Meng Haoran, Han Yu, Bai Juyi and Li Shangyin. In the book *Collection of Yueyang Tower Poems* published in modern times, readers can find more than 600 excellent pieces.

Junshan Island, a Live Chinese History Book

Across the lake from Yueyang Tower lies Junshan Island. Liu Yuxi, an ancient poet once described it thus: "Watching the waters and mountains of Dongting, it appears like a green snail in a silver plate."

It is a piece of mountainous land formed 7,000 years ago. Though only a square kilometre, the island has thousands of years of Chinese history carved on it. No other scenic place is comparable in terms of Junshan's high concentration of cultural relics and the time span they cover.

Before I visited Junshan, I heard it was once called Youyuan Mountain, meaning only those who have a natural bond with this mountain can reach it. Several examples in history prove this. During the Song Dynasty, Chen Yuyi visited Yueyang twice and wrote many wonderful poems but never got the chance to reach Junshan. The first time he set out for the island, the weather turned so bad there was no way he could cross the 13 km of waves surging over the lake; the second time, the mountain was occupied by the peasant army led by Yang Yao. He expressed his regret in a poem: "I love Junshan and have come to the southern prefecture from 10,000 *li* (5,000 km) away.... But I can only admire its wonders from a distance and have never voyaged there." Liu Daxia of the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644), who served as the governor of Guangdong and Guangxi and also minister of defence, tried three times to visit Junshan but was blocked by storms each time. He too left Yueyang disappointed.

1

Today, by taking a speedboat, you can visit the island despite wind or rain. It took me 40 minutes to reach Junshan by motorboat. It is true you can find traces of every historical period here. Each of its 72 hills, such as the Five Wells and Six Terraces, Thirty-Six Pavilion and Forty-Eight Temple, tells of an episode in history. Nine of the mountain's scenic spots are listed as cultural relics under state or provincial protection. These include the Zhudingtai (Tripod Casting Terrace) where Emperor Huangdi died and became immortal; characters inscribed on the cliffs by Emperor Qin Shihuang; the Dragon-Shooting Terrace where Han Emperor Wu shot the dragon; and the Fragrant Wine Pavilion where the celestial wine was found and secretly drunk. This is a spot said to be where the original legend of

2

"Liu Yi's Love Story" took place, with witnesses such as the Liu Yi Well and Message-Passing Pavilion. Yang Yao, the leader of a peasant uprising, built his headquarters, called Flying-in Pavilion, on the mountain. Early Buddhists built the Chongsheng Temple. The mountain, which is Taoist land, is also believed to be where Lu Dongbin became immortal.

Romance of an Ancient Tomb

The most attractive spot on Junshan Island is the Two Concubines Tomb. Nestling in a luxuriant bamboo grove, the tomb looks ordinary. A staircase of 11 steps leads to its front; on the facets are carved Qu Yuan's works, "Xiangjun" and "Madame Xiang". There are also sculptures of the two concubines. The tomb was robbed in 1966 and a 0.21-metre-long, hallowed gold dragon was dug out later. The current tomb was rebuilt in 1979.

The story of Shun and his two wives is popular among the Chinese. Legend has it when Emperor Yao passed his throne to Shun, he also married his two daughters to his successor. The Shun family lived happily and his two wives worked hard to help him rule the country and expand the territory. Later, Emperor Shun died during an inspection tour of the south. His two wives travelled to this place to look for their husband. On hearing the sad news, they were both heartbroken. After weeping bitterly in the bamboo groves, they jumped into the Xiangjiang River and drowned themselves. *The Broad Records* published in the Western Jin (317—420) describes it as follows: "The two daughters of the Emperor, Shun's wives, were both titled Madame Xiang. After Emperor Shun died, the two wives cried. Their tears spread on the bamboo, leaving mottles on the plants." Mao Zedong was deeply moved when he heard the story and wrote his line: "A plant of mottled bamboo carries a thousand drops of tears." A story about the tomb of Shun's two wives first appeared in writing in *Records of History*. It tells that when Emperor Qin Shihuang travelled through Junshan, the wind blew terribly. He asked a scholar beside him what kind of god this Xiangjun was, and was told the two daughters of Emperor Yao and wives of Shun were buried here.

A later version darkens the image of Emperor Qin Shihuang. It goes that the emperor got angry after hearing the story. He ordered his men to set fire to the mountain and inscribe the cliffs to seal the mountain. It might be true that Shun's two wives were buried here, but the fact has never been proven. Later generations enjoy the story that adds romantic colour to Junshan's history anyway.

But I did see a grove of mottled bamboo growing by the Two Concubines Tomb. All the bamboo plants had purple cloud patterns. This special variety of bamboo has long intrigued people. Since the Tang Dynasty, many literati have written about mottled bamboo. Chinese men of letters are rich in imagination. The tomb with a romantic story and the bamboo grove certainly provide inspiration. In fact, mottled bamboo has been regarded as an emblem of love.

People say the mottling is actually the result of a kind of fungal infection on the bamboo. But we would prefer not to know this. Love stories about mottled bamboo and other legends lose their attraction if scientifically examined.

1. Stone Lion, a relic on Yueyang Tower
2. Nine of the cultural relics on the small island of Junshan are listed as under state or provincial protection
3. Legend says that mottled bamboo grows here because the two wives of Shun shed their tears in the grove
4. The Liu Yi Well, on the other side of the mountain, has clear and sweet water
5. Tourists come to Junshan to look for traces left by great literati in history (by Xie Guanghui)

EXPERIENCES IN TRAVEL

The Boy Selling Soda Water

One year my tour group visited the Ruyuan Canyon, near Heyuan City in Shaoguan County, Guangdong Province. Pointing down into the canyon, our local guide said: "Those wanting a challenge, follow me." More than a dozen tourists stepped forward. I was one of them, walking at the head of the column.

After taking about 100 steps, I looked down into a canyon so deep I could not see the bottom. The stone steps were narrow, slippery and almost vertical. Now and then I had to grasp wild rattans and rocks to lower myself down. The canyon is over 300 metres deep, and I was only part of the way down. What should I do? There was only one path. Tourists could only go down, and could not turn around and go back up.

Just as I felt I could neither advance nor retreat, I heard a boy's voice behind me: "Uncle, buy a bottle of soda water." I turned around and saw the boy. He had followed me all the way from the top. The other members of our group were also being followed by children, each holding a small red plastic bucket with four or five bottles of soda water in it. Not wanting to have to carry anything on the treacherous path, I told him I would buy one when I had reached the bottom and then climbed back up. To my surprise, whenever my steps were unsteady from then on he stretched out his hand to support me. With his help, I grew braver. Finally, I got to the bottom of the 1,680 stone steps, then returned safely to the starting point.

Whenever I recall this adventure, I'm very grateful to the boy, whose name is Wen Jun.

Wong Shan Chung, H.K.

How We Were Fooled in Egypt

During this Easter holiday, three friends and I joined a 10-day tour to Egypt. One free afternoon, we rented two carriages, asking the drivers to take us to the market. Before getting into the carriages, we negotiated the fare—10 Egyptian pounds for half an hour.

After about 10 minutes, the carriages suddenly stopped in front of a shop selling paintings on papyrus. The drivers told us the horses needed to eat grass, and we could spend five minutes in the shop. When we entered the shop, the shop assistants greeted us warmly, and offered us what they said were preferential prices. We bought a few paintings. Leaving the shop, we saw a shop assistant put some money in the drivers' hands. Then we knew we had been fooled. We were mortified.

Ten minutes later, the carriages stopped in front of a shop selling Egyptian ornaments and silverware. The drivers told us the horses needed to take a rest, and we could take a look in the shop. Though we were not happy at this, we did not object. After a short tour of the shop we left. We told the drivers we would like to return to the wharf. Upon hearing this, one of the drivers talked a while with the other one in Arabic, then turned to speak to my two friends in English: "I've got something urgent to do. I must leave now. Please pay me the price for one hour for the round trip to the wharf. The other driver will take you back to the wharf." Then we four got into one carriage. A few minutes later, the driver demanded another 10 Egyptian pounds for the two additional passengers. At this my friends flew into a rage, declaring we had been tricked. But afraid the driver would leave us stranded on the roadside, we paid him what he wanted. For a while, we four were angry with each other. But fortunately we came to terms with the situation and were later reconciled.

Dora, H.K.

Beloved Souvenirs

Thailand's Floating Candles Bloom like Flowers in Water

I really longed to take a fresh flower bath in Thailand. Unfortunately, when I went to Bangkok, I could not afford such an up market treat. However I happened upon a wide variety of floating candles in a market. Their colours and shapes were beautiful. How romantic it would be taking a bath at home with all these candles floating on the water.

I bought some floating candles at the Narayana Phand Underground Plaza (opposite the Bangkok World Trade Centre) which handles both wholesale and retail sales. After bargaining, I paid 100 bahts for four floating candles, or about HK$5 each. The shop owner put the "flowers" in a box, packing it with great care. His service was excellent.

Kit, H.K.

Necessities En Route

A Knapsack Cover – a Must for a Long Journey

If you travel to remote areas of mainland China, you cannot avoid taking a long-distance bus.

It's best to place large luggage items in the middle of the bus roof rack, so they are totally covered by a sheet of waterproof rubberized fabric to avoid exposure to the sun and rain. You should hold your precious small bags in your hands to keep them safe and clean, and put the medium-sized ones under your seat or in the passageway. However you will find the floor of the bus and the soles of passengers' shoes very dirty, with melon seeds and skins, fruit skins, various coloured things and saliva and phlegm spread everywhere. And then there are the footprints left by passengers after they come back from the rest room... How can you expose your beautiful clean bags to all these? A waterproof rucksack cover will be very useful to keep your bag clean all the time. If you think a rucksack cover is too expensive, you can buy a red, white and blue striped holdall in mainland China for only a few yuan. To buy a rucksack cover: Try any store selling outdoor gear; prices range from 10 to several hundred dollars.

Little Cloud, H.K.

Recommended Hostel

A Rural American Flavour

Though Atlanta's Disneyland is far away, it is the largest and well worth visiting. If your have enough time buy the four-day ticket, which includes admission to the main parks, shuttle bus and accommodation.

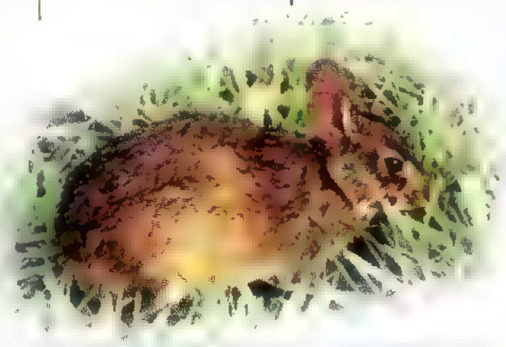
I stayed in the two-storey wooden holiday houses at the Disney Institute. The price is the same as for the star-rated hotel but quality of lifestyle is even better. I would like to recommend it to other tourists for the following reasons:

1. There are a total of over 100 apartments, with a central reception desk. Guests can take golf carts instead of walking in the Institute.

2. All local environmental features, even marshes, have been put to optimum use and integrated into the surrounding landscape.

3. Each wooden house is usually divided into eight apartments. Each apartment is well equipped, and more spacious than hotel accommodation.

4. Each apartment has a kitchen and a sitting room.



5. Natural scenery and fresh air surround the wooden houses. Visitors can often see rabbits and squirrels.

Lai Siu Kei, H.K.

Contributions Solicited

We are grateful for the warm support of our readers who have sent us their contributions. Please remember that you are always welcome to write to us about your various travel experiences to share with other readers. You can write articles on any topic related to travelling. Stories for this column should be at most 500 words. A full-length story more than 1,500 words with good photos may be published in other columns, such as "Traveller's Corner" or "Travel Journal".

Please mail your story to: English Editorial Department, Hong Kong China Tourism Press, 24/F Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or send it via E-mail: edit-e@hkctp.com.hk.

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China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Captivating Southeastern Guizhou	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Fenghuang — a Diamond in Green Land	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Into the World of Egrets	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Three Times to Kuche Grand Canyon	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
In Touch with the Real Bogda	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Others: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Cover	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Articles	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Tips for the Traveller	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Art Design	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

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What are your suggestions for improvement?

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*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.

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City	Name	Star	Address	Tel	Fax
Anshun	Yan'an Hotel	***	Beside Guihuang Highway, Anshun	(853) 3228988	(853) 3320247
	Hongshan Hotel	**	42 Honghu Rd E, Anshun	(853) 3253756	
	Minzu Hotel	**	67 Tashan Rd E, Anshun	(853) 3222500	(853) 3222621
	Xixiushan Hotel	**	63 Nanhua Rd, Anshun	(853) 3223900	(853) 3223900
Duyun	Longtan Hotel	**	44 Huandong Rd C, Duyun	(854) 8281820	(854) 8280965
Guiyang	Baicheng Hotel Guiyang	****	246 Zhonghua Rd S, Guiyang	(851) 5866888	
	Guilong Hotel	****	62 Shengqi Rd, Guiyang	(851) 5592888	
	Guiyang Plaza Hotel	****	2 Yan'an Rd E, Guiyang	(851) 6825888	
	Holiday Inn Guiyang	****	1 Guikai Rd, Guiyang	(851) 6771888	
	Jinjiang Fresh Flowers Hotel	****	1 Zhonghua Rd S, Guiyang	(851) 5867888	
	Guizhou Park Hotel		6 Beijing Rd, Guiyang	(851) 6822888	(851) 6824397
	Hualian Hotel Guiyang		137 Zhonghua Rd C, Guiyang	(851) 5824998	(851) 5821304
	Jinqiao Hotel Guiyang		34 Ruijin Rd C, Guiyang	(851) 5814872	(851) 5813867
	Qiaoyi Hotel Guiyang		1 Nanchang Rd, Guiyang	(851) 5509188	(851) 5500170
	Ruijin Hotel	***	62 Ruijin Rd S, Guiyang	(851) 5802118	
	Shanlin Hotel Guiyang		118 Bldg, Shanlin Rd, Guiyang	(851) 6523000	(851) 6515003
	Tenglong Hotel Guiyang		88 Yan'an Rd C, Guiyang	(851) 5827188	(851) 5827188
	Zilin Hotel Guiyang		110 Yan'an Rd, Guiyang	(851) 5864000	(851) 5864000
Kaili	Kaili Hotel	**	3 Guangchang Rd, Kaili	(855) 8234660	(855) 8221658
	Yingpanpo Hotel	**	53 Yingpanpo Rd E, Kaili	(855) 8234600	(855) 8234600
Lupanshui	Zhongshan Hotel	**	52 Zhongshan Rd W, Lupanshui	(858) 8222597	(858) 8225639
Tongren	Jinjiang Hotel	**	8 Jinjiang Rd S, Tongren	(856) 5222341	
Xingyi	Panjiang Hotel	**	4 Panjiang Rd W, Xingyi	(859) 3223456	(859) 3222670
Zhenning	Huangguoshu Hotel	**	Management Office, Huangguoshu Scenic Area, Zhenning	(853) 3592110	(853) 3592111
Zhuyi	Xiangshan Hotel	**	103 Zhongshan Rd, Zhuyi	(852) 8224991	(852) 8827014
	Zunyi Hotel	**	3 Shilong Rd, Zhuyi	(852) 8223868	(852) 8221479

Flights to and from **Guiyang**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Bangkok — Guiyang	5	2030	2300	SZ4061
Guiyang — Bangkok	5	1650	1930	SZ4062
Beijing — Guiyang	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1230	1510	CZ8611
	1 2 3 4 5 6	2050	2330	CZ8613
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1510	1750	SZ4162
	1 3 5 7	1040	1325	SZ4163
	2 4 6	0825	1110	SZ4164
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1455	1735	XW 811
Guiyang — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6	0920	1150	CZ8612
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1740	2010	CZ8614
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0900	1125	SZ4161
	1 3 5 7	0715	0950	SZ4164
	2 4 6	1150	1425	SZ4163
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1825	2055	XW 812
Chengdu — Guiyang	1 2 3 4 5 6	1155	1255	SZ4436
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0730	0830	SZ4439
	1 3 5 7	0820	0920	3U 317
	2 4 6	1550	1650	3U 347
	2 4 6	0810	0910	3U 473
	2 6	1210	1300	HU7529
Guiyang — Chengdu	1 2 3 4 5 6	1020	1110	SZ4435
	7	1905	1955	SZ4440
	1 3 5 7	1340	1445	3U 318
	2 4 6	2030	2140	3U 348
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1640	1735	3U 376
	2 4 6	1210	1310	3U 474
	2 6	1030	1120	HU7530
Fuzhou — Guiyang	1 3 6	1815	2105	CZ8683
	1 3 5 6	1300	1610	SZ4567
	1 3 4 6	1520	1815	MF8421
Guiyang — Fuzhou	1 3 6	1430	1730	CZ8684
	1 3 5 6	0910	1220	SZ4568
	1 3 4 6	1855	2210	MF8422
Guangzhou — Guiyang	1 2 3 4 5 6	1045	1210	CZ3411
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1620	1740	CZ3509
	1 2 3 4 5 6	2105	2230	CZ8691
	1 3 4 6	2025	2145	SZ4332
	2 5 7	2040	2200	SZ4332
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1605	1725	SZ4361
Guiyang — Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6	1300	1420	CZ3412
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0825	0935	CZ3510
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1900	2010	CZ8692
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0800	0915	SZ4331
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1400	1515	SZ4362
Hangzhou — Guiyang	1 4 7	1935	2300	CZ8654
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1300	1510	F65935
Guiyang — Hangzhou	1 4 7	1610	1855	CZ8653
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1910	2105	F65936

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Hong Kong — Guiyang	6	2050	2220	SZ 413
	2 5	1800	1930	SZ 413
Guiyang — Hong Kong	6	1815	1940	SZ 414
	2 5	1535	1700	SZ 414
Nanjing — Guiyang	2 7	0810	1150	WH2819
	1 3 5	0820	1210	WH2863
	3 6	1420	1840	WH2881
	1 4	1250	1700	WH2881
	3 6 7	0930	1240	MU5439
	1 2 4 5	0910	1220	MU5457
Guiyang — Nanjing	2 7	1230	1530	WH2820
	1 3 5	1250	1630	WH2864
	3 6	1920	2320	WH2882
	1 4	1740	2140	WH2882
	3 6 7	1320	1605	MU5440
	1 2 4 5	1300	1555	MU5458
Shanghai (Pudong) — Guiyang	1 2 3 4 5 6	1935	2150	SZ4562
	2 6	1355	1620	SZ4563
	3	1250	1515	SZ4563
	1 3 4 5 6	1810	2050	3Q4545
Guiyang — Shanghai (Pudong)	1 2 3 4 5 6	0900	1110	SZ4561
	2 6	1105	1315	SZ4564
	3	1000	1210	SZ4564
	1 4 6	1530	1725	3Q4546
	3 5	1530	1725	3Q4546
Shenyang — Guiyang	3 7	1305	1740	SZ4661
Guiyang — Shenyang	3 7	0800	1225	SZ4662
Shenzhen — Guiyang	1 2 3 4 5 6	1800	1925	CZ8633
	2 4 5 7	2015	2140	SZ4363
	1 3 6	1905	2025	SZ4363
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0920	1050	ZH 895
Guiyang — Shenzhen	1 2 3 4 5 6	1600	1720	CZ8634
	2 4 5 7	1815	1935	SZ4364
	1 3 6	1700	1820	SZ4364
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1130	1325	ZH 896
Xi'an — Guiyang	3 6	1650	1840	WH2881
	1 4	1525	1700	WH2881
	2 4 7	1845	2000	CZ8627
	1 3 5	2100	2225	SZ4261
	4 7	2010	2135	SZ4261
	2 6	1150	1320	SZ4261
	2 6	0120	0240	CJ6939
Guiyang — Xi'an	3 6	1920	2050	WH2882
	1 4	1740	1910	WH2882
	2 4 7	1640	1805	CZ8628
	1 3 5	1830	2000	SZ4262
	4 7	1800	1930	SZ4262
	2 6	0940	1110	SZ4262
	2 6	0320	0450	CJ6940

** For reference only.*

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CZ = China Southern Airlines
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WH = China Northwest Airlines
XW = China Xinhua Airlines
3Q = Yunnan Airlines
3U = Sichuan Airlines

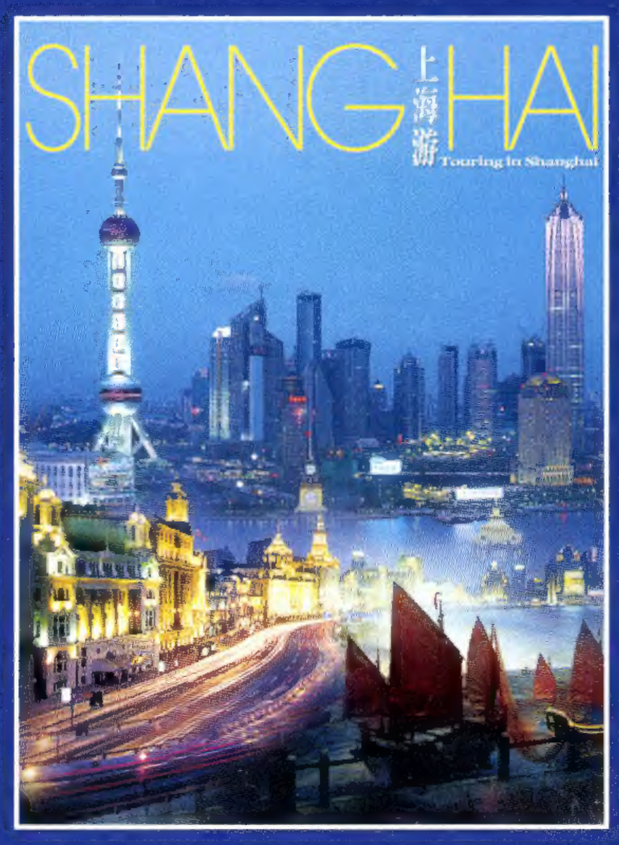
Highlights of Issue No. 270

- The announcement of the visa-free entry policy for residents of Hong Kong or Macao to the Tibet Autonomous Region in this May was great news for many eager to tour the "Roof of the World". Our correspondent in next month's "Feature Story", for example, could not wait any longer to set off for Tibet with a new itinerary: Starting from Xining to Yushu in Qinghai Province, heads to Dêgê in Sichuan, then cuts on to the Sichuan-Tibet Highway, and finally arrives Lhasa. Though travellers can fly to Tibet's capital city, where you may find foreigners from around the world outnumber the locals, our correspondent has chosen to **Visit Tibet as a Backpacker** — a relatively adventurous way. After surviving a series of risky situations and receiving unconditional help from strangers on the way, she eventually learnt the true meaning of travelling — that the journey is always more important than the destination.

- **Haiyan County** in Zhejiang Province is always seen as a "back garden" by the Shanghainese. The county's 50-plus km coastline is the cradle of numerous outstanding works of literature and art. Tourist attractions in Haiyan are many: the Nanbei (South & North) Lake, Yiyuan Garden — one of the 10 famous gardens in South China, the history-old Haiyan paintings drawn in various themes including gods, plants, animals, history and auspicious words, and the unparalleled rolling-ball dance. All in the next "New Attractions".

- From a Chinese phrase "There is Mt. Huangshan in South China, and Mt. Qianshan in North China", we learn that the latter mountain is located in **Anshan** City, in Northeast China's Liaoning Province. Known as the birthplace of China's steel and iron industry, Anshan is also one of the excellent tourist cities in China. Free of pollution, the city boasts many attractions for tourists. One can appreciate Mt. Qianshan with its peak resembling a Buddha; the exquisite carving of the world's largest jade Buddha; view the iron and steel making processes in a huge industrial plant; and even rejuvenate in the renowned Yangzigang Hot Spring.

BEST SELLER



Shanghai has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.

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